

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

DEC., 1916
15 CENTS



The Best Short Stories of the Month

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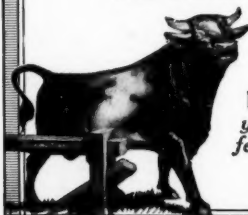
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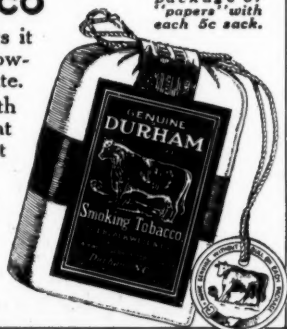
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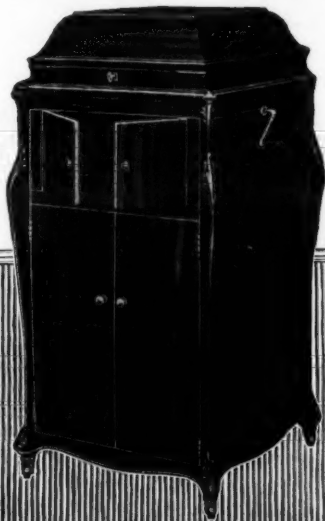
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Walter Davison, the doggonedest fool in the county, got stung Sunday night by a small girl.

How About Ensilage?

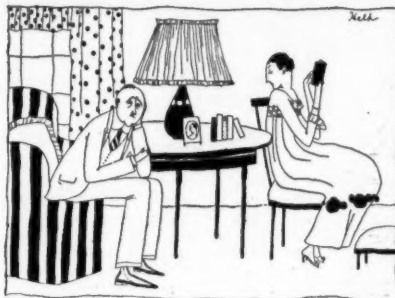
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 24

DECEMBER, 1916

Number 3

The Adventure of Grandmother Metcalf

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Magnum Opus," "The Healing of the Hills," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. FUGSLEY

A lively, humorous mystery story in which two impecunious young men get a surprise and Grandmother Metcalf has the time of her life.

CHAPTER I.

MORNING was not yet awake upon the main street of Copper Junction—the straggling half mile of low-built stores, saloons, Chinese eating houses, moving-picture palaces, and the like, ingeniously constructed of whatever material happened to be handiest, from concrete blocks, red bricks, and adobe, to converted packing cases, tin covers, and burlap. Indeed, night might have been said still to rule, for despite the gradual paling of ruby and topaz from the eastern horizon, the windows of "Idaho Ike's" house of chance, where gentlemen of sporting proclivities parted nightly with much wealth, still sent two sickly yellow beams out into the pearly morning, and two thoroughly dejected-looking ponies were tied to the posts in front.

The patient, weary beasts were the only living things in sight when two young men came hurrying round a corner, their air of stealth being as noticeable as their air of haste. Seeing the

street before them clear, they sped to a one-storied building whose façade was constructed, with noticeable architectural thrift, of biscuit-box covers nailed flat and painted gray.

That their entrance, however clandestine, was a legal one, seemed proved by the fact that it was effected by a latchkey attached to a long steel key ring that one of the young men wore. On either side the narrow hall to which the door opened by the key gave entrance, were offices whose ground-glass doors bore various signs. The two nearest the entrance on the right, to which the young men gained admission with a second key, proclaimed themselves as belonging respectively to "Leonard Greer, Attorney and Counselor at Law" and to "Doctor Oscar Vail, Office Hours 10-12 a. m., 4-7 p. m." It was into the office of the counselor at law that the young man with the key chain admitted himself and his companion. Once inside the room, they locked the door again and sank

breathlessly into the two chairs that, with a desk much battered, a typewriter stand ditto, and two rows of legal-looking books upon shelves, comprised its furnishings.

"But after all," cried the young man of the key chain bitterly, "what good does it do? We may have got out ahead of her this morning, but she'll sit up all night to-night! Minerva isn't one to be beaten by a little early rising."

"But you never know what a day may bring forth," declared the other optimistically. "There may be a big accident in the smelter—a score of men badly injured—I performing miracles of skill and soothing, reducing old Bradley's debts for workmen's compensation by the thousands! You may get the cases of the injured workmen—may induce them to compound. More thousands saved for Bradley! A commission for us, a trifle of grateful acknowledgment—"

"Oh, yes, I dare say! Our fairy godmother may drive up any minute in her pumpkin coach and invite us to go with her— Say, Oscar, have you a cigarette?"

"Not one left. Not a scrap of paper, not a shred of 'baccy. Cut it out, Len. It's a filthy habit, and haven't I warned you about the nicotine heart?"

"I've got to have tobacco!" Leonard Greer turned his pockets inside out in the hope of discovering some scraps of the weed in the dusty seams. But nothing rewarded him. "Say, Oscar—you've got a way with you—go over to Ike's place and hit him for a can of straight-cut and—"

"I'm hanged if I will!" declared Doctor Vail. "The last time I was in there, that low-down skunk had the nerve to shove my account at me when I asked for a package of Sweet Caps."

"How much was it?" inquired Greer, with curiosity.

"Eighty-seven dollars and something."

"It's less than mine at the Palace."

"No use, Len. I won't do it. I'll gladly go out with you and rob the Mogollon coach; I'd participate any time you say in holding up the paymaster of the Sant' Anita mines when he rides up from the bank on Monday afternoon; but I'm everlastingly hanged if I touch one of the skinflint tradesmen in this town again! Their manners, Len, are lacking. A gentleman can't deal with them. Talk about your Western lavishness and hospitality and good-fellowship! A dream, a farce, a dizzy dope story! But are you with me on the holdups?"

"With what do you expect to make your get-away? You seem to forget that our horses have been attached and sold for the benefit of the more grasping of our creditors. Oscar, why don't you make up to Minerva? She's not a bad sort, really—"

"No more is a keg of nails a bad sort," retorted Doctor Vail spiritedly. "But I'm not making up to it! No, thank you, Leonard. Try her yourself. I haven't any luck with girls, anyway. Not real luck. They don't take me seriously. They think I'm a sportive goat, just grand as free vaudeville, but when they remember that life is real, life is earnest, they pass little Ozzy up. I suppose it's because I'm short and fat and have a comical face. It's a crime to send a man into the world handicapped like that. Old ladies take to me; gran'ma used always to come toddling up to me to ask me the way to Altman's or the Natural History Museum. Gran'ma thought I had such an honest, kind face—I've heard her say so! If only there were a gran'ma or two in Copper Junction, our fortune would be made. But that's the trouble with settling in one of these new, boom towns—they haven't had time to grow a crop of nice, mellow, wise old ladies!"

"Wise!" scoffed the morose Mr. Greer.



Where gentlemen of sporting proclivities parted nightly with much wealth.

"Why don't you make up to Minerva yourself?" inquired Doctor Vail, passing by the insinuation. "You've got the gloomy type of countenance that makes a hit with the girls. They think it means a heavy-weight intellect, a romantic nature, a secret sorrow, and all that sort of thing. I've occasionally thought I detected a gleam of something nearly human in Minerva's eye when it was turned toward you. Go to it, Leonard, old man! Get engaged to her. You can cook up a quarrel some day after we get on our feet— What the dickens are you guffawing at, like a hyena?"

"At the thought of the day when we'll get on our feet in this God-forsaken hole! We've been here two years now, and you've never had one single pay patient, and I've never had

one single pay client. On the contrary, instead of making our living off the town, the town has more or less made its living off us. We fell for almost every come-on game; we bought stock in mines that had been abandoned in '76; we invested in spavined horses, and went blindly into partnership with cattle thieves; we sat in at little poker games with hearty, cheery card sharps. And now we've had to stop eating at Minerva's because of her acrimonious line of table conversation about 'dead beats,' and we'll soon have to stop sleeping there because she'll take down the beds in our room! 'Get on our feet! Oh, I like that!'

"She wouldn't take 'em down if you'd make up to her," persisted Doctor Vail. "Why not? She's not more than forty—well, not much more, and——"

"You know perfectly well that I am going to marry Winifred Sanborn, and I think your jest is in blamed poor taste."

"Oh, well, if you feel that way about it! But what the devil *are* we going to do? Have you kept enough sewed in your belt to get back home with when the worst comes to the worst, as we agreed?"

"No. Have you? I've managed to hold on to enough for a second-class fare as far East as Chicago. What have you in reserve?"

"Couldn't get farther than Omaha on mine. But Tommy Fraser lives in Omaha—remember? Tommy who was always trying to find new ways to spend his millions. If we got that far, I'd just as lief hit Tommy for a loan. He's the kind of fellow those original Western yarns were told about—always anxious to do something for a friend."

"Let's telegraph him." Greer looked hopefully at Doctor Vail. Then he went on, amplifying his theme: "We've simply got to get out of this. We were two imbeciles when we piled aboard that Pullman two years ago and set out to grow up with the rattlers, the cactus, and the open-hearted citizens of this country. You need to finance yourself too long! I dare say we *did* find the air a little heady at first; I dare say we *did* act a little more like a couple of fools out for a lark than two earnest young men embarking upon serious careers; but a broad-minded community would forget something some time, you'd think! They haven't forgotten our first appearance out here. They never will. I don't like to own myself beaten, but, after all, why not own it when it's so? I wouldn't live in this place now if you'd give me the smelter as a gift! Let's borrow the money from Tommy Fraser to get away—paying up before we go."

"Or even not paying up——" said Doctor Vail dreamily.

"Come on! We've reached the end of our rope. Let's acknowledge it and make a new start in a civilized place!"

"I'm with you. And I'll go out now and buy a few buns and some coffee and—— Is there any alcohol there in that bottle in the bathroom?"

Greer went to the narrow bathroom that divided his legal office from his friend's medical one and lifted the alcohol bottle gingerly from the shelf.

"Enough to cook the coffee—and the chops," he added hopefully. "Get chops, Vail. Dig into that Omaha fund of yours. Tommy Fraser will make it up to us. And I think that with a chop in my stomach"—tenderly he rubbed the wrinkled waistcoat that covered that portion of his anatomy—"I could really believe in that new start of ours. Too bad we've not written to Tommy since he was fired from college for putting the pink chemise on the founder's statue in the chapel!"

"Oh, Tommy's not the sort that wants to be bothered with letters," answered the doctor convincingly. "Let's make up the telegram and get it off now. The office must be open."

"For the love of Mike, don't forget the cigarettes!" begged his companion.

Leonard Greer and Oscar Vail had been friends from their first meeting, some fourteen years before, in Doctor Hazelwhite's Home School for Boys. One of them—Leonard—was the only son of an impoverished East Indian missionary. Doctor Hazelwhite rather specialized in missionaries' sons, taking them at half price and seeking to make them independent by a slightly modernized Dotheboys' Hall method. Leonard had been destined for the church and the foreign field. Oscar was the nephew and ward of a rich bachelor surgeon in New York, and he also had been decreed by avuncular authority to carry on the family professional tradi-

tion. Oscar had had as much spending money as the school rules permitted; Leonard had had none. Leonard had learned easily, and Oscar had learned with the difficulty of a youth who can perceive no earthly reason for study.

They had, however, become friends and had shared their respective belongings freely, Leonard his lessons and Oscar his funds. They had enjoyed together a period of suspension from the Home School, due to a persistence in classroom pranks, which the surgeon uncle had been pleased to consider amusing, on the whole. The only crime that would prove fatal to Oscar's prospects, as far as he was concerned, he had declared, was gambling. That he would never tolerate, never extenuate. Oscar had gone to Bournemouth College—to which Leonard had been consigned by the missionary because of the sound exegetical views of its trustee—chiefly out of his affection for his friend, but partly also because he had found the Harvard examinations beyond him. It was at Bournemouth that they had met Tommy Fraser, who had sampled several of our institutions of higher learning before retiring thither. Tommy was the only millionaire whose presence had ever shed a golden luster over Bournemouth halls, and the incident of the pink chemise had been a searching test of the faculty character. After it, the president always felt himself—and frequently referred to himself—as one who had been greatly tempted, and intimated that the prince of darkness might still be found at his old trick of exhibiting the kingdoms of the world as a reward for treachery to principle.

Leonard and Oscar had managed to escape complicity in Tommy's crime largely because they had been absent at the time of its perpetuation, acting as jailers to the kidnaped president of the freshman class. Though their later escapades had kept them constantly sim-

mering in hot water, they had finally emerged from Bournemouth with academic degrees. Leonard had meantime announced to his father that he had outgrown the superstitions of religion, had weighed the Bible in the scales of reason and found it wanting, had exploded the creation myth, and that he intended to become a lawyer. His ministerial training would have been almost free, but the legal had been another matter. His father had cast him off with a good deal of fine, biblical rhetoric, the full force of which had been somewhat impaired in transit from Hindustan.

However, Leonard had succeeded in making his way through the Columbia Law School, while Oscar had studied medicine in the P. & S. They had shared a floor in Doctor Vail's house on Gramercy Park, but had seldom seen that great and busy man. They had taken their meals outside, coming and going as they pleased. And if Oscar had not had the misfortune to be taken red-handed in a spectacular raid upon a gambling club to which he had had the entrée, they might have stayed in New York forever. But Oscar had been caught, recognized, hauled before the avuncular judge after he had been dismissed by the city's, and his doom had been vigorously and unmistakably pronounced.

As he was within a few months of his degree, Doctor Vail would finance him until he received it; he would then give him a thousand dollars in lieu of all future aid and expectations, and he might shift for himself. Leonard, who had been doing law copying in his leisure, had saved a few hundred dollars. For reasons which they forgot after they had resided in Copper Junction a little while, they had selected that remote community as the one in which to begin their careers. The conversation just recorded shows what success they had met.

Two or three hours later, after breakfast—the telegram having meantime been dispatched to Tommy Fraser, and the young men, with unquenchable optimism, taking a confidently roseate view of the future in consequence—there came a firm, brisk step in the hall outside the office. Their faces stiffened apprehensively as they heard it. In pantomime, Greer asked Vail if he had locked the office door after his last entrance; in vigorous pantomime Vail declared that of course he had performed that simple, obvious act of self-preservation. Holding their breaths, they listened. A sharp, determined, rat-a-tat sounded. They stretched their eyelids wide, as if the dreaded visitor might be able to hear the brushing of their lashes.

"Come, come, gentlemen, as you call yourselves," counseled a voice, harsh, but unmistakably feminine. "I know you're in there. I smell coffee and burned mutton grease! You might as well let me in. I'll stay here all day if you don't, and I'll have a good deal to say! My time is precious, but so is the money you owe me— Aha!"

The last triumphant exclamation was due to a loud, explosive cough on the part of the rapidly suffocating Doctor Vail. He met his partner's severe look with piteous, protesting eyes.

"Hang it, I couldn't help it!" he said. "I didn't do it on purpose. Shall I let her in?"

"You might as well," answered the morose and disgusted Mr. Greer, and as Doctor Vail turned the key and opened the door in such a way as to keep his own person well behind it, Miss Minerva Whittelsey, proprietress of the only "home" lodging-and-board-ing establishment in Copper Junction, marched in. She was a woman of about forty, tall and big framed. She had a look of almost equine strength. Her skin was parched and deadened by strong suns and alkaline winds; so was

the scanty knob of drab hair that formed a rest for her grimly unadorned black sailor hat.

"Your trunks," she stated with admirable directness and promptitude, "are on the porch. I shan't give them storage. I don't believe there is anything in them that would compensate me for my losses. I'm here for my latchkeys. Give them up."

"But, Miss Minerva, how unreasonable!" said Oscar Vail, emerging from behind the door. "Just because we happen to be a little behind in our running account with you—"

"Running! Galloping!" amended Minerva. "You owe me, between you, a hundred and eighty-three dollars and forty-seven cents. I earn my living—I don't sponge it; I pay my tradespeople—I don't cheat them"—no one who heard Miss Whittelsey's pronominal emphasis could have doubted that the art of satire had lost a mistress when she had taken to room renting—"and so I need all the money due to me. I just stopped in on my way to Lawyer Custis to ask if you intend to do anything about your bill. I'm placing my case in his hands."

"How shortsighted, Miss Minerva!" cried Doctor Vail, again, as Greer sank deeper and deeper into speechless gloom. "How unlike you! Put the case against me in the hands of Mr. Greer, here. Let him handle it for you. He'll do it in masterly manner. Pay him the retaining fee. Then he can pay something on his bill to you! See? You'll have to give that shark of a Custis a lot. I'll assume Mr. Greer's share of the indebtedness and—"

Miss Whittelsey had been speechless, breathless, before this unspeakable bravado. But she recovered her faculties; she exploded into a sound that arrested the flow of Doctor Vail's suggestions. He paused and looked at her, innocent inquiry in his round blue eyes. And then, before the exclamatory wrath

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of Miss Minerva could be transmuted into articulate speech, there came another rat-a-tat upon the office door. A boy from the telegraph station stood there, yellow envelope in hand.

"Si says," he announced with a grin, and without official pretense of ignorance of the message, "that he allows you wouldn't want no delay on this."

"You'll excuse me, Miss Whittelsey, I'm sure," said Vail with an elegant air, as he tore open the envelope.

Leonard watched him, wild-eyed with anxiety.

"Ah!" drawled Oscar, in a manner reminiscent of the high-life drama of Broadway.

He passed the slip to Leonard carelessly. He took out a cigarette—he had not neglected that last plea of his comrade when he had dug down into the final reserve fund, the escape fund, for coffee and chops; he lit it languidly.

Greer's dark face broke into a smile. "Thank God!" he cried, forgetting how long ago he had eliminated God from his universe. He was incapable of his friend's Spartan pose of aristocratic indifference. Vail lifted supercilious eyebrows, repossessed himself of the precious paper, and handed it to the astounded Miss Whittelsey.

"Perhaps you'd be interested in this?" he said casually. She took it in her big, square-tipped, work-roughened fingers, looked from it to Oscar, from Oscar to it, and read:

OMAHA, Nebraska, April 18, 1912.

Sure. Am telegraphing you two hundred fifty bones.

THOMAS Q. FRASER.

"I—I—don't understand," she faltered, returning to him the fluttering promise of relief.

"No?" Doctor Vail smiled amiably. "It's very simple. A friend of ours in Omaha, Tommy Fraser—I wonder what the 'Q' stands for, Len? I never knew old Tommy had a middle name—has just—er—repaid by telegram a

small advance dating back to our college days."

Leonard repressed a start of surprise. Minerva suddenly came to.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars? At the Western Union office?" she vociferated. "I'll go down with you, Doctor Vail, and I'll take out one hundred and eighty-seven dollars and forty-three cents—no, one hundred and eighty-three dollars and forty-seven cents—as the money is handed over to you. I have a receipt ready!"—her hand shook with nervousness as she dived into her leather hand bag—"and I'll have your trunks put back into your room at once—"

"Don't trouble!" barked Leonard Greer, finding his voice for the second time in the interview.

"No, really, don't trouble, Miss Whittelsey," echoed Vail thoughtfully. "Of course, your place is—not bad. You mean well, I have no doubt. But no! There is no charm to the cookery, and charm is an ingredient, I should say, as necessary as salt. No more, thank you! I'll send Hogan's transfer up for the trunks."

"I hope, gentlemen," began Minerva waveringly, "that there may be no hard feelings. After all, though I may have been—abrupt, I've kept you with a roof over your heads and food in your stomachs, without a cent of pay or a word of thanks, when you couldn't get trust for a paper of pins, if you'd needed them, anywhere else in Copper. Because I could see you were gentlemen."

Minerva's scrawny throat worked a trifle convulsively, Minerva's dry lips quivered.

"We'll stay," said Leonard gruffly.

"Oh, yes, of course, since you put it that way, Miss Minerva! We'll stay with you," Oscar graciously assured her, "as long as we remain in Copper Junction."

"Are you thinking of leaving?" de-



"I hope, gentlemen," began Minerva waveringly, "that there may be no hard feelings."

manded Minerva, taking a fresh grip on her hand bag.

The partners shot warning glances at each other. The whole town would be about their ears, the instant their departure was advertised as imminent. Visions of writs, summonses, subpoenas, flitted before their eyes. Already enough damage had been done—a hundred and eighty-three dollars and forty-seven cents out of that limited two hundred and fifty!

"Not if we can make a living here," Doctor Vail replied, with an air of sad seriousness, to her question. "But—

can we? Can I, for example? Is any one ever sick out here? There are a few accidents in the mines and smelter, and the company physician takes care of those. There are a few births, and apparently nature and a few old Mexican women take care of those. The lungers all go to the blooming specialists at the hospital at Fort Boone. If any one ever does acquire a good case of typhoid or appendicitis, he goes to Doctor Damon, who, between you and me— But no! I must be bound by professional etiquette! But—I put it to you—where do I get off?"

"Well, we are pretty healthy," admitted Miss Minerva regretfully. "Copper's noted for it. Still, I wouldn't give up yet, Doctor Vail, if I were you—and if I could pay my way for a while. Some of our folks are getting on in years; and some are making money hand over fist and eating and drinking a lot, which don't do any particular harm when a man's in the saddle eighteen hours out of twenty-four, but hurts the insides of those who take their exercise in a revolving chair! But I can't sit here gassing all day! I've got to step along to market. And after we've been down to the telegraph office, I'll go over to Schmidt's and lay in some new sheeting—"

The sharp, determined gleam came back into her eyes. The partners breathed a sigh in unison. There was no escape! There would be no compromise!

"I'll get my hat," said Oscar sadly. As he passed the dejected Mr. Greer, he bent and whispered, "At least, I'll try to make her break fifty-fifty with us."

And then, for the third time on that astonishing morning, a reflection darkened the glass door and a rat-a-tat sounded heavily upon it. Leonard, who had seen fortune enter by it once only to threaten to disintegrate, jerked it open rudely. A big, hairy man stood before him.

"I've been poundin' on the doctor's door, there, for fifteen minutes," the newcomer announced. "Ain't he in? Ain't these his advertised office hours?"

"I think you'll find him in his office now, if you wish to consult him," said Leonard agreeably.

"Aire you the lawyer?"

"I am."

"Well, you'd better stay around here till I get through with the doc," said the visitor. "I'll have somethin' to say to you, most like, when I'm done with him."

"I shall be here for"—Leonard made a motion as if to look at his watch, but recalled the whereabouts of that time-piece in season to save himself the embarrassment of producing only a key ring—"I shall be here for an hour or so."

"All right," grunted the big man, and stamped noisily back to the door of the rear office.

"Laws!" whispered Miss Minerva, when the door had closed. "Laws! If it ain't old Kerry Porter! Your fortune's made, Mr. Greer—yours and Doctor Vail's, too—if Kerry Porter's going to employ you! That is, it ought to be made by rights, for he's one of the richest men out on the Gila reservation. But he's mean! My, but he's mean!"

"You see, Miss Minerva," suggested Greer, with a desperate attempt at ease, "that Doctor Vail and I are likely to be detained for some time. It seems too bad that you should wait. Suppose—suppose you—er—go? And Doctor Vail, after he has been to the Western Union, will go straight up to the house and—"

"Oh," retorted Miss Whittelsey, settling herself more firmly in her chair, "there ain't nothing so pressing that I have to do that I can't afford the time to wait to go with Doctor Vail. I feel it would be more satisfactory all around, Mr. Greer—more satisfactory all around!"

CHAPTER II.

"Well, sir," barked Doctor Vail's unexpected patient, glaring down upon him, "before we begin operations, I want to know your charges."

"It depends upon what the operation is," replied Oscar.

"Operation? I ain't expectin' to have any operation performed. Oh, I see what you mean. I said, 'Before we begin operations.' I'll change it to suit you—since you're so particular! Before we begin proceedin's, I want to

know your charges. I'm a well-off man, an' the way I got to be a well-off man was by watchin' out for my money—by never embarkin' in nothin' without I knew what it was goin' to cost me to get out. What do you charge?"

"I understand you now," answered Oscar amiably. "For an ordinary office visit, my charge is two dollars——"

"What?" exploded Mr. Kerry Porter.

"Two dollars," repeated Doctor Vail firmly.

"Young man, you've got your nerve with you! Why, Doctor Damon, that's been out here thirteen years, an' who's got a reputation—he charges only seventy-five cents for an office visit."

"You have said it, Mr. Porter," explained Doctor Vail, with an engagingly confidential air. "You have said it—Doctor Damon *has* been out here for thirteen years. He is, I have no doubt, an admirable, old-fashioned family physician. But you will admit that Copper Junction has not afforded him the means of keeping up with his profession. I, sir, during the thirteen years that Doctor Damon has been here gaining your trust and friendship—I have been studying. I have been preparing to bring to this fair young city of yours the latest teachings of science, the most advanced discoveries of——"

"It ain't any wonder you ain't had much practice!" growled the patient, cutting short Doctor Vail's sonorous periods. "Two dollars—for an office visit, mind you! Well, let's waste no more time about it. I ain't particularly interested in hearin' you spout your autobiography or whatever they call it. I want an examination, fore an' aft, A to Zed. A thorough physical examination——"

"That," interrupted Oscar genially, "will cost you five dollars. The two-dollar fee is for an ordinary consultation—you describing your stomachache,

I prescribing a little nux vomica. But a thorough examination is another matter."

"I won't pay it! It's highway robbery! Why don't you go out an' hold up the cashier of the Copper First National? It would be just as honest. I won't pay it!"

"All right," said the young man coolly. "You needn't. And I needn't make the examination. And I won't."

"You won't, eh?"

"No."

"A pretty kind of a doctor you are! A pretty kind of a doctor! Why, see here, young feller, you doctors are expected to cure the sick without takin' no thought of reward. You've vowed an' swore to go to the assistance of them that need you without stoppin' to inquire anythin' about your fee. It's your oath, the oath of Hippopotamus or somethin' like that! You can't bluff me. I *know*."

"My good sir, you have already—somewhat boastfully, I may add—informed me that you are a well-off man. Neither my oath nor the modern custom of my calling obliges me to prescribe for you free, or for less than I choose. I've treated the poor out here without a cent of pay; I've also treated a good many skins who were not poor without a cent of pay. I'm through with the latter, at any rate. And now, if you don't mind going, I'll lock up. I have"—and Oscar sighed—"an appointment with a lady."

"But I want an examination."

"Five dollars—in advance, please!" retorted Oscar.

Whereupon, there was further objection on the part of Mr. Kerry Porter. But with fingers against Tommy's comforting telegram in his pocket, Oscar held to his point, until at last the big, hairy man, with a sigh that was a grunt, passed a five-dollar gold piece over to him, and the examination began. Oscar was thankful that Copper

Junction's lack of a market for stethoscopes, X-ray machines, and blood-pressure testers, had left him still the owner of some of the instruments that he had magnificently brought West with him.

"Notice any swelling of the ankles?" he asked, after he had lifted Kerry Porter's lids and had peered into his eyes through a glass.

"What's that got to do with my eyes?" snarled the gentleman.

"They've both got a lot to do with your general condition. I want you to answer me, you know. I can't do you a decent job—one worth that five dollars—unless you help me. It'll be money wasted, and that, I understand, is anathema to you."

"If you mean that I ain't blamed fool enough to want to throw money away, why, you're on. All right, then. My ankles swell up the size of barrels——"

"Humph!" said Oscar ponderingly.

He went on with his examination. He was conscious of a thrill of pleasure in the use of the instruments, in the accuracy with which they registered certain things. He liked the deft precision of his own hands, the orderly, intelligent action of his brain and his memory.

"I'd have made a crackajack physician if I hadn't been so busy playing the giddy goat," he told himself, and frowned.

Then he banished the frown with the recollection that he was only twenty-seven; life wasn't over yet, by any manner of means! One was not unchangeably wedded to giddy goatiness at that age!

By and by Mr. Porter was engaged in knotting a blue silk handkerchief under the collar of his gray flannel shirt. His eyes—baggy as to lids, yellowish as to whites, reddish as to rims—stared anxiously at Oscar, who was busily engaged in noting certain things in a book with many virgin pages.

"Well?" snapped Kerry Porter after a second.

"Sorry, Mr. Porter, but I have to tell you that you're—a seriously sick man. I don't want to alarm you unduly, but you need to make a complete change in your habits. You've been a pretty regular drinker, I——"

"Who's been talkin' about me an' my drinkin'?"

"No one. I don't remember ever to have heard your name. But I know what my examination has told me. You've got to cut out alcohol absolutely. You've got to cut out milder stimulants, even—tea, coffee, tobacco. I will make you out a diet chart——"

"Hell! I don't want your diet chart. It'll be about as good readin' an' as good eatin' as the one—— Say," he interrupted himself to ask, with a sort of comical anxiety on his face, "is it Bright's?"

"With complications," Oscar assured him promptly.

He took a certain satisfaction in saying it, though he was by no means a cruel young man and had no innate taste for pronouncing the sentence of death upon his fellows. But this great bully had irritated him.

Kerry Porter sat down suddenly. His bearded face went white. He drew a long breath, and his telltale eyes looked out through the windows of Oscar's office as if they were piercing through the purple hills to the west and seeing a far, lonely country of which he was afraid. Oscar was suddenly repentant of his brutality.

"You see," he said, "I put it straight and strong to you because I want you to be scared into taking a decent amount of care of yourself."

"Me scared?" scoffed Kerry Porter, coming back from the far country and bristling angrily. "You can guess again, young feller. I don't scare so easy. I don't scare when I see the round hole of a revolver stuck three

inches from my nose—as I have seen it more than once! You don't scare Kerry Porter with your tales, you nor ol' Doc Damon, either! I know you both. You want a good, fat job of takin' care of me—twenty-five dollars whenever you motor out to my ranch in the hills, an' the like of that! No, sir! You've another think comin', if you think you've got me frightened!"

"Am I to understand," asked Oscar formally, "that you had already consulted Doctor Damon, before coming to me?"

"I can't tell what the size of your understandin' may be, but that's the fact of the matter."

"And my diagnosis confirms his?"

"You mean that you both try to put a fright into me so as to make money off me? Yes, then! I didn't believe him; I knowed he was an old foggy that most likely didn't know what he was talkin' about. I thought I'd come to see a new, young whippersnapper—thought maybe they'd learned somethin' in medicine since Doc Damon went to school. But they ain't—or, anyways, you ain't! I call my five dollars lost!"

"Well, I can tell you this!" cried Oscar angrily, as the big man stamped defiantly toward the hall door. "You might as well throw away all the five dollars you can in the next three months. For they won't be much good to you after that date!"

"An' I can tell you one thing!" shouted back the recalcitrant patient. "An' that is that my five dollars ain't goin' to do you any good durin' the next three months! So you can put that in your pipe an' smoke it! They ain't goin' to do you much good durin' the next three months, or any other three months! Thought you could frighten me, did you? Thought you could frighten ol' Kerry Porter an' make a rich thing off'n his fright! Not on your life! You got left on that! An' I can tell you, lots of folks that is

figgerin' on spendin' Kerry Porter's five dollars are goin' to be just as badly left—mark you that!"

With his hand upon the knob of the door leading into the corridor, he paused. His rage abated into thought. His own words had, it seemed, changed the drift of his mind. He looked back at Oscar with all belligerence disappearing from his face.

"Say," he remarked conversationally, "the other feller's a sprig of the law, ain't he?"

"Mr. Greer is an attorney and counselor at law," replied Oscar sulkily. He was ashamed of his unprofessional outburst.

"Say, you're fond of mouth-fillin' words an' expressions, ain't you? Well, is that there attorney an' counselor at law capable of drawin' up a waterproof will?"

"You mean a will——" began Oscar inquiringly.

"I mean a will that no relatives which are left out of it on purpose can break, as any fool might know!"

Oscar declined to take up the challenge to his intelligence. He confined himself to stating that Leonard was a duly admitted member of the bar of New Mexico and could draw up as tight a will as any lawyer in the United States.

"Guess I'll go in an' see him. Mind you, I ain't afraid on account of what you told me—I don't believe it, an' I wouldn't be afraid if I believed every word of it—but it's just as well to make your will while you think about it. The last one I made wouldn't suit me at all now. An'—you never can tell. My pony might run away with me to-day an' throw me an' break my neck. So I guess I'll step in an' see this attorney an' counselor at law of yours."

"I think you'll find Mr. Greer in his office," said Oscar politely, and as the door closed upon his pugnacious client, he sighed in whole-hearted relief.

"If he goes in there to make his will," he said, "Minerva will have to get out. That's plain. She'll simply have to! And if Minerva once gets out——" He fingered Tommy Fraser's telegram lovingly. "A little something on account," he murmured, "ought really to satisfy her. It's grasping and selfish of her to expect the entire amount of her bill. Why, has the woman no civic conscience? Doesn't she care what becomes of the bills that her fellow citizens have against us?" He shook his head over the abysmal selfishness of Miss Minerva.

He heard the hall door of Leonard's office open and close. Listening, he smiled beatifically. She was going out! But only for a second did the smile adorn his pink features. For Minerva's sharp, decisive rat-a-tat sounded upon the panel of his door, and Minerva's sharp, decisive voice said, when he opened it to her:

"Well, Doctor Vail, you and me might as well be stepping along now to the telegraph office. You ain't likely to have any more patients this morning, I reckon, and I'm in something of a hurry. And I've decided to be real generous with you young gentlemen——"

"Yes?" said the lugubrious Oscar, who had made considerable business of finding a hat that hung in plain sight on a hook over the table.

"Yes." Minerva beamed with such benevolence as nature allowed her face to express. "I'm going to remit that forty-seven cents. A hundred and eighty-three dollars will make us square, then——"

Leonard Greer came into the room through the connecting bath. He wore an important manner.

"Don't go out for a few minutes, Vail," he said. "I shall want you to witness Mr. Porter's signature."

"Certainly, old man!" cried his friend enthusiastically. He turned apologetically toward Miss Minerva. "Sorry,"

he said, "but you see how it is. And I won't keep you waiting——"

"Oh, I should like Miss Minerva to witness it, too," blundered the important Leonard. "I need two witnesses."

Minerva shot a triumphant glance at Oscar, who favored his partner with a murderous glare.

"I'll be delighted, Mr. Greer," she said sweetly. "And it's no trouble at all for me to wait. I'd have waited for Doctor Vail, anyway, even if you hadn't needed me."

And by and by, after they had both watched Mr. Kerry Porter affix a great, sprawling signature at the bottom of a sheet of foolscap that was sedulously guarded from their eyes, and had affixed their own signatures in testimony of the fact that they had so watched him, Doctor Vail disconsolately led the victorious Miss Minerva down to the telegraph office and, pessimistically telling himself that life was a mockery and good fortune itself futile, he handed over to her a hundred and eighty-three dollars of the generous Tommy Fraser's loan. She relented toward him a little when she had the money bestowed safely somewhere upon her gaunt person, for she said, with an inviting look:

"I hope you gentlemen'll come home early to-night to supper. I think I seen some teal duck in Conway's as I passed by."

"Thank you," said Oscar, in a hollow voice, as he looked dejectedly at the sixty-seven dollars in his hand. "Thank you!" he laughed, as he had heard actors laugh in moments when they had a fresh perception of the irony of existence. Teal duck, indeed!

CHAPTER III.

"I tell you it wasn't my fault. That blanked idiot of a Peter Farlan had spread the glad tidings of Tommy's telegram through the whole of Copper. Lord, I don't know how he managed

to do it so thoroughly in so short a time! He must have used a town crier."

"We're as badly off as we were before we telegraphed Tommy!" groaned Leonard. "Upon my word, Vail, I didn't think you were such a damned imbecile! Why the devil didn't you get rid of them? Why the devil didn't you face them down?"

"Damned imbecile yourself!" retorted Doctor Vail, with spirit. "If it's so easy to get rid of a hungry horde of creditors, why the devil didn't you get rid of Minerva this morning? It was you—you remember!—who actually kept her here when we might have got rid of her. A witness! My eye, couldn't you have sent out to Ling Hi's and let the chink witness that old curmudgeon's signature? Or any one? But no! You had to ask Minerva to wait and do it! You had to ruin my only chance of getting down to the Western Union unaccompanied! And now you dare to talk to me!"

"Two hundred and fifty dollars gone! Wasted!" There was a wealth of bitterness in Greer's voice such as would have made the fortune of an actor bemoaning the flight of a wife, the treachery of a friend, or any other dramatic incident. "Thrown away on debts! How much did you say you had left?"

"Fourteen dollars," was the sullen rejoinder. "And I can tell you it's about twenty-eight more than you would have had if you had had to run the gantlet through those rows of greedy—hyenas!"

Leonard made no answer. He had exhausted vituperation. There was no more he could say to the feeble creature who had actually paid bills, or partly paid bills, through Copper that morning. He frowned into space.

"And to think," he cried, "of that old gorilla who was here having eighty thousand to leave and more!"

"You mean the charming Mr. Kerry Porter?"

"Yes. What opportunity have I had to learn the possessions of anybody else in this confounded place? Have I had the drawing of so many wills?"

"Well, you know that's not my fault! You needn't chew me up and spit me out because of that," Doctor Vail pointed out reasonably.

Leonard smoked in gloomy silence, disdaining to reply. Idaho Ike had seen fit to celebrate the payment of a portion of his bill by the presentation of certain smokables, and Oscar thought resentfully that Leonard was blamed unreasonable and ungrateful not to take that into consideration. If he, Leonard, had been the victim of those perfectly legal holdups that had punctuated Oscar's path from the Western Union office, he would have been so blamed sour about it that no one would have given him a match to light a cigarette, much less a big box of Havanas.

"He's an old beast," Greer interrupted his companion's thoughts to remark.

"Who's an old beast? Idaho Ike? I don't blame the man for trying to get part of his money while he had the chance——"

"Who's talking about Idaho Ike? I'm talking about my late distinguished client, Kerry Porter, of Mimosa Ranch."

"Oh! He didn't seem to have the manner that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere," agreed Oscar.

"Manner? He's got the heart of an Apache, or worse! Do you know, he isn't going to leave a cent to the half-breed woman he's kept out there on his ranch for nearly twenty years? And not a cent to the little pack of quarter-breeds!"

"How do you know he's kept a half-breed woman and raised a half-breed family?" inquired Oscar, in astonishment. "Did he confide in you?"

"No. He didn't mention whom he was excluding from his property—only

those upon whom he was bestowing it. But while you were out—scattering Tommy's loan—

"Aw, cut it out!"

"Well, while you were out, Lawson, from across the hall, looked in. He'd seen Porter leaving here, and he wanted to pump me. He's a perfect old woman for inquisitiveness. But we reversed the process. The old fellow seems to be quite a character—rich, violent, avaricious. He hasn't been coming to Copper to transact his business much lately, it seems—goes to Fiero, instead, though it's twenty miles farther for him. He's quarreled with most of the people here. I suppose he came back because he had a fresher set of quarrels with the Fiero people. Lawson says he's a terrible old soak, although whisky doesn't seem to show on him."

"Doesn't it, though!" cried Oscar derisively. "He's drunk himself into as fine a case of Bright's

as you'd care to see—poor devil! Another six months—another three months, probably—will finish Mr. Kerry Porter."

"You don't say so!" Leonard paid his friend the tribute of a respectful look—a man who could foresee death like that! "Well, then, some people will be coming into unexpected wealth sooner than they dream. I suppose, though, there'll be a contest. Lawson says that besides the half-breed and her children, he has two brothers living, and some nieces and nephews."

"What's he done? Left it to charity, or to found a temperance society?"



It was quite apparent that Grandmother Metcalf was having the time of her life.

"Professional ethics, my dear fellow, don't allow me to discuss my client's affairs in such intimate detail," said Leonard pompously. Then he relaxed. "Not directly to charity. To charity only in case the legatee is already dead."

"You mean he's chosen to leave all that money to some one he doesn't even know to be alive?" Oscar stared his incredulity.

"Just that. It's a funny story. You wouldn't suspect that creature of latent sentiment, would you?"

"I would not!" replied Oscar, with explosive emphasis.

"Just the same he is. He's leaving his money— Of course I oughtn't to mention it—"

"Oh, go on! To whom am I going to blab, in this place, even if blabbing were my long suit, which it isn't?"

"He's going to leave it to an old sweetheart down East—almost the whole of it. There are legacies for the family just large enough to enable counsel, in case of contest, to say that old Porter obviously knew what he was about, and did exactly what he wanted to do. There's no chance of setting it aside on the undue-influence claim. Every one gets just enough to show that he remembered them all perfectly and didn't mean to give them any more. Except that poor half-breed, and I suppose she has no standing in court at all. He's left it all to an old sweetheart, if you please, whom he hasn't seen in nearly forty years, and he doesn't even know whether or not she is still alive. If she isn't, it all goes to erect an engine house in his native town of Middlebury, Maine, to be called by his name, and to found a library, with the same condition."

"I hope the old sweetheart is alive," said Oscar. "I can see just what those two buildings would look like, can't you? Does he leave it to her whether she married or not?"

"No conditions."

"Think of that old dame, if she is alive! Think how she will read the first letter announcing her legacy! She lives," pursued Doctor Vail dreamily, "in a story-and-a-half yellow cottage down in—Middlebury, Maine, was it, that had the privilege of calling Kerry Porter son? Down in Middlebury, Maine. She's got a bay window looking south, and it's full of plants, and there's a nice, big, shiny base-burner in the room. A cat asleep before it, too. Not a need in the world, Leonard, has that old lady! She has enough to live on exactly as she wants to live!

And here this bomb explodes and drops gold eagles—oodles of them—all over her dining-room rag carpet between the base-burner and the window where the red and white geraniums are blooming. And she never knows any more peace.

"She becomes afraid of burglars and of fortune hunters. She doesn't know how to spend her income. The church tells her she ought to give it a new chime of bells and repair the belfry. And her relatives tell her she oughtn't to do anything of the kind; they expect to inherit. And the local banker takes to advising her about investments, and worries her to death. And Cousin Jane says a little trip to California this winter would simply *save* Mary! And John's boys want to go to college, and — It's a crime, a positive crime, to destroy the comfort of that old lady's declining years! And look at us! Think what eighty thousand dollars would mean to us!"

"If it were a young sweetheart," he went on, after a few seconds of pensive reflection, "of course we could take our foreknowledge and go down and make hay while the sun shines. We could go and woo and win her and be safely married to her by the time Kerry Porter fulfills my diagnosis and shuffles off the stage. And then, of course, it would be too late for our proud spirit to revolt at marrying a woman richer than ourselves, too late for it to refuse to live upon our wife's money even for a brief—a very brief—period while we were getting on our professional feet. Say, Leonard," he added, resuming a more natural voice and manner, "do you suppose there are such Johnnies as that anywhere outside books?"

"How do I know?" growled Leonard. "There seem to be lots of kinds of fools around loose outside books! There may be that kind as well as some others."

"But we wouldn't be that kind—would we?—if only Kerry Porter's old

sweetheart were a young sweetheart. Gosh, the luck that some people don't have! I almost think I'll write to Nunky and ask him to let the dead past bury its dead and lend me some money."

"Oh, don't worry about Nunky! He'll leave it to you—see if he doesn't! In the end, he'll have family feeling, family pride——"

There came a rap on the door. From mere force of habit, the young men exchanged a questioning, alarmed glance. Then they relaxed. It couldn't be Minerva, the most terrible of all their dangers and dreads! Minerva, at a great price, had been removed from the list of present terrors.

"Come in!" they shouted in unison.

Lawson, from across the hall—"mining expert" was the legend upon Lawson's ground-glass door—came trotting in with a newspaper in his hand. Lawson was an incurable gossip, a delver into other people's personal affairs, unquenchably interested in what did not concern him; and up to this time his services as mining expert had not been in sufficient demand to interfere with his favorite indoor sport.

"Say!" he chirped. "This is funny. Here's a paper from my home town my sister's just sent me. Wanted me to read the account of the wedding of a friend of ours—girl I used to know myself. And she's married a man the same name as you, doc. See here." He pointed to an inside page where the nuptial tale was spread in large type and adorned with photographic reproductions. "Doctor Oscar Jarvis Vail, the noted New York surgeon," he read aloud. "Any relation to you, old man?"

Oscar grabbed the sheet, stared at the pictures.

"Nunky! Nunky!" he cried, in a caricature of tragedy. "How could you do it, Nunky, when I counted so on you? Yes, Lawson, it is a relative. It is an uncle. It is, in fact, *the* uncle,

who brought me up, and who certainly ought to have consulted my wishes before making a serious move like this."

"She's a nice girl, Ellen Gasting is," said Lawson defensively. "She was a trained nurse. I guess that's how she came to know him."

"A trained serpent!" said Oscar, with farcical despair.

Lawson laughed.

"You can keep the paper, if you'd like," he remarked generously "and read all about it. I've read it. Sorry if it puts your nose out of joint."

"The *Fergustown Morning Sun*," read Oscar gloomily. "*Morning Storm*, say, rather—*Morning Cloudburst, Earthquake, Cataclysm!* Isn't it disgusting in a man of his age? I see this flattering biography of him, here, says that he is forty-five. He took a vow eight years ago never to be more than forty-five. He's fifty-two, and I know it. 'Miss Ellen Gasting, known to all of Fergustown—' Um! '—daughter of Richard, the popular grain-and-feed merchant of Arbuckle Avenue—graduate of our high school and of St. Martha's Training School for Nurses—' Twenty-seven years old! He's nearly twice as old as she! Think of that, Leonard! Posing as forty-five! He ought to be ashamed of himself! I have no doubt the marriage could be set aside if she brought suit on the ground of gross deceit. Forty-five!"

"Oh, cut it out, Vail! Lemme see the paper, will you? I haven't seen a single Eastern sheet since I began to find the atmosphere of the Palace too frigid for my comfort. And those that the Palace takes in aren't any Easterner than Chicago."

"Take it," said Oscar, passing it over, "and read all about the oyster supper at the M. E. Church and the drill of the high-school cadets—the high school from which Ellen the Usurper was graduated——"

"Oh, let up on the clown business for a while, can't you?" grumbled Leonard, taking the paper and proceeding to lose himself in the news of Fergustown.

Doctor Vail, after looking out into the street for a few seconds, examining the legal books for another few seconds, and whistling a few bars of "No One to Love Me" for a few more, wandered through the communicating door into his own quarters. He had a rather decrepit lounge in the room, and upon this he disposed himself now and puffed at a meditative pipe for a few minutes until meditation came to its appointed end in a doze.

He was aroused by a wild onslaught from Greer. Greer's right hand was violently shaking his shoulder; Greer's left hand was waving the *Fergustown Morning Sun* before his half-closed eyes; Greer was shouting something almost unintelligible at him.

"Read it? Read what? And why?"

He sat up and took the paper from his friend's hand. It was the front page that was presented to his attention. "'Burglar Mystery Solved,'" he read, and cocked a frightened eye upon his friend. Was Leonard counseling burglary as the appointed path of issuance from their troubles?

"Read on, read on!" commanded Leonard.

"The mystery of the burglarious entrances effected in the Squirrel Hill district during the past three months, which have kept that portion of our city in such a state of nervous anxiety and have so completely baffled our police and detective force, was solved last night when Mrs. Dorcas Metcalf, of No. 27 Winthrop Avenue, Squirrel Hill, caught Edward Brannigan, alias 'Big' Brannigan, in her house. Mrs. Metcalf, who is not a heavy sleeper, heard sounds on the second floor shortly after midnight.

"Fearing that one of her granddaughters, Miss Rose Metcalf and Miss Virginia Black, teachers in the Girls High School, might be ill, she left her room to investigate. As she opened her door out into the broad second-story hall, she thought she saw the door of the linen closet, a commodious cupboard on

the opposite side of the hall, move slightly as if pulled from within. Mrs. Metcalf's brain acted swiftly. Darting noiselessly across the hall to the closet, she closed it firmly from without and turned the key in the lock, the robber not having had time to take it out as he attempted to hide on hearing Mrs. Metcalf's door open. Then Mrs. Metcalf telephoned the police, and then and not until then did she wake her granddaughters. Big Brannigan put up no resistance when the police arrived, and Chief Dorton expects to win a full confession from him, explaining fully the recent depredations.

"Mrs. Metcalf and her granddaughters have lived in the house on Winthrop Avenue for three years, ever since they came to Fergustown from their native place, Middlebury, Maine. Miss Rose Metcalf, a graduate of Wellesley, teaches English history and algebra in the Girls High School, and Miss Virginia Black is the instructor in physical exercise, having been graduated from Doctor Sargent's School the same year that her cousin left Wellesley. Both are very popular in Fergustown society, are members of the Women's Wednesday Afternoon Club, the Squirrel Hill Golf Club, the Woman Suffrage Club, the Thursday Bridge Club, and the College Club. The family attends the First Congregational Church, and the two young ladies are teachers in the Sunday school.

"Will you kindly inform me," demanded Doctor Vail, when he had read the tale of the Fergustown burglar thus far, "what the dickens you want me to read this stuff for? Is Big Brannigan a friend of ours? Or did we belong to Miss Virginia Black's Sunday-school class back home? Or did we learn algebra, in the dear, dead days that are no more, from Miss Rose Metcalf?"

"Don't you see that they came from Middlebury, Maine?" asked Leonard impatiently.

"Yes, I see that, and it leaves me calm."

"Well—Dorcas Metcalf is the name of the old sweetheart who is going to get Kerry Porter's pile—Dorcas Metcalf, of Middlebury, Maine! And this old lady is just about the right age—isn't she?—to be that sweetheart. A grandmother!"

"You're hipped, Leonard! This is Mrs. Dorcas Metcalf, not Miss Dorcas Metcalf, and Kerry Porter's old sweetheart must have been a Miss Dorcas Metcalf."

"Read on—read on!" commanded the lawyer impatiently, and Oscar waded on through half a column of biography of Big Brannigan, as extracted by the police, before he reached a final Metcalf paragraph:

"Mrs. Metcalf is of a well-known Maine family. Her grandfather, Ebenezer—

"Say, do I have to read all about the Metcalfs back to Adam? Oh, very well, then!

"Her grandfather, Ebenezer Metcalf, was one of the last of the whale fishers of the Eastern coast. Mrs. Metcalf, who was born a Metcalf, married a second cousin, Torrance, who represented the Eighteenth Maine District at Augusta, from 1889-96.

"Oh, I see!"

"Yes, you see—she was born Dorcas Metcalf, and she married a cousin! She's old Kerry Porter's legatee!"

"It's interesting, of course," agreed Oscar, gazing at his friend with meditative eyes. "But I'm jiggered if I can see why you're so excited about it. We can't go and study the old girl and impersonate her when the time comes to take over Kerry's worldly possessions. I give it up, Leonard. What's the answer?"

Leonard seemed a little nonplused. He opened his mouth as if to speak. Then, instead, he laughed rather foolishly.

"We might go and make up to the granddaughters," he suggested.

"I thought you were so keen on marrying Winifred Sanborn?"

Leonard flushed.

"This," he remarked, pulling an envelope out of his pocket, "is my busy day. I had a letter from Winif— from Miss Sanborn—Mrs. Blair, I mean—while you were out at the telegraph office this morning. She—didn't care to

wait any longer. You can read it if you want to. She was going to be married in three days. She is married by this time!"

"I don't want to read her mean little set of excuses, Len, old chap!" Oscar's pink face was flushed with indignation, and he bridled like a young turkey cock. Then he came back to his immediate problem. "But even so—even if she has acted like a—cat—pig—skunk—whatever animal you hate the most—you don't seriously mean to try to win those two New England schoolmarms on the off chance that Grandmother Metcalf—who sounds pretty agile and husky yet, my boy—may possibly leave them her dough that Kerry Porter's going to leave her?"

"It does sound rather crazy, doesn't it? And, of course— But New England schoolmarms, as you call them, are often nice girls. Of course, though, it's an insane idea. And yet—it does seem as if Providence were pointing a way to us—doesn't it?—when all in one day we learn who is going to be Kerry Porter's heir, when he is going to—er—make her his heir—and where she actually lives?"

"I thought you were through with Providence long ago?"

"Oh, can't I use words like any other man? Call it the finger of fate, of chance—call it anything you please. It's certainly a remarkable set of coincidences, and if we had brains, we'd know how to turn them to account."

They sat and glowered at the paper a while. Then Oscar spoke:

"I always make a hit with old ladies, don't I, Len? And—and—do you remember how neatly we pulled off that kidnaping of Grey when he was freshman president at Bournemouth?"

They looked at each other in a sort of startled and excited solemnity. After a long stare, Leonard finally spoke.

"It isn't," he stated, with deep con-

viction, "as if it were harming a single soul."

And then they looked again at each other.

CHAPTER IV.

Unquestionably, Grandmother Metcalf was having the time of her life. Her granddaughters, Virginia and Rose, exchanged giggling, affectionate asides about it, even while their eyes shone with filial anxiety lest the experience prove too harrowing for the old lady. To be the chief witness before a grand jury ought, by all the laws of nature, they felt, to be something of a trial to the nerves of even a vigorous sixty-five. Suppose the counsel for the defense should be nasty, should try to badger grandmother, should interrupt when she insisted upon chatting pleasantly and voluminously, instead of answering with a brief "yes" or "no?" Suppose that, unsuspected all these years, grandmother had a weak heart? She would collapse after this ordeal!

Meantime, as has been said, it was quite apparent that Grandmother Metcalf was having the time of her life. Grandmother had always liked masculine society, and here at last, after a long period of enforced abstinence from it, she was surrounded by it, she was basking in it—one might almost say that she was blooming in it.

She sat upon the witness seat, a rather small, slight, active-looking old lady, wearing a close-fitting old-fashioned black bonnet with white and purple pansies lying close against her parted, waved hair of brightest silver. Her withered cheeks were agreeably pink, partly from the pleased sense of her dramatic position in court, but also—as the least thoughtful observer could tell—from working in a pretty little flower garden and waging relentless war upon cutworms and rose aphids; from sitting on a sunny, shady,

vinyl piazza with her knitting in her hand and thence calling neighborly greetings to the passers-by and detaining them for agreeable interchange of neighborly gossip. Yes, those old cheeks were pink from these and from savory activities around a shining kitchen stove, and from all such salutary beautifiers of elderly complexions. Grandmother Metcalf's eyes were bright and brown behind her silver-rimmed spectacles, and grandmother's strong white teeth were shown in frequent friendly smiles.

She wore a dress of black Henrietta cloth, not made in the fashion of that particular year of grace—which was skimpy in the extreme—but in the perennially becoming fashion of grandmotherhood, with an ample, plain skirt and a plain basque. A fichu of fine white net, finished with beautifully fluted little frills, was fastened below her neck by a big, old-fashioned amethyst brooch, and there were fine, fluted frills at her wrists.

"Isn't she pretty?" whispered Virginia Black to Rose Metcalf.

They sat among the witnesses who had already been examined. There had been little enough for them to testify to, and their yea had been yea, and their nay nay, while grandmother's yea was a sprightly account of the whole evening's existence.

It had been, she informed the entranced listeners, the night of the Browning reading in the church parlors, and they had all gone. The girls liked Browning, though she, for her part, freely admitted that she didn't understand what he was driving at, and much preferred Thomas Moore and Felicia Hemans, and was fond, too, of Adelaide Proctor, and didn't the grand jury like Whitcomb Riley? However, it was always a treat to hear Doctor Bowditch read or recite or say *anything*, and it was always a pleasure to meet the fellow members of the First

Congregational, and she was glad she had gone, despite the unilluminable obscurities of "The Ring and the Book."

She supposed it was while they had all been out that the prisoner had managed to slip into the house. It was the hired girl's evening out, too, and though Temperance Prouty—the girl in question—seldom took advantage of her Thursday-evening privilege since they had moved to Fergustown, because she knew so few people to go out to, nevertheless, on this particular evening, she had been away from home because she had happened to find some old acquaintances who lived on the other side of the town—

"And they let her get away with it!" said Rose Metcalf, listening to grandma's brisk recital with tender amusement. Rose's use of English was not pedagogic. She did not have a pedagogic face, either, bearing, indeed, a marked resemblance to her grandmother, except that her fine-spun hair was a sooty black and her rosy cheeks were not sagging and wrinkled. "If only she doesn't introduce my ripped skirt braid and your new cold cream before she gets through!"

"Every one always lets her get away with whatever she wants!" whispered back Virginia Black. "Even that Brannigan boy looks as if he could learn to love granny! But then, of course, granny has already said that she didn't believe he meant any real harm—that he was, as he claims, only cold and drunk and trying to find shelter!" Virginia did not look like Grandmother Metcalf, being tall and pale and poetically blond. "Isn't it wonderful how she can always find some excuse for a man? How she believes every word that they utter? Truly, Rose, I think it your duty as a devoted granddaughter to get married, so as to introduce into the ménage a man for granny to spoil!"

"Do it yourself," said Rose absently.

She was turning all her real attention toward Grandmother Metcalf, who, in answering the question, "And you took particular note of the time?" was cleverly contriving to inform her examiner that she had had shrimp salad for supper. And the examiner, instead of sharply calling her to order, beamed upon her as if he wished he might have eaten that shrimp salad in her company!

In spite of grandmother's charitable theory that Edward Brannigan was telling the truth when he declared that he had been drinking, that he was cold and homeless, and that, in a befuddled state, he had been merely trying to find shelter that night, the grand jury of Fergus County held him for trial on the ground of burglary. They accepted the police view that he was one of a gang that had been working in the Squirrel Hill district all the autumn. When he found that this was no joking matter, they all said, he would turn State's evidence, and the gang would be duly rounded up and dispersed to prison, to the safety of the community and the cessation of the public disapproval now directed toward the police and the detective bureaus. So the big, stupid-looking fellow was remanded for trial, and was led off between his keepers. And the next case for the consideration of the grand jury was called. And Grandmother Metcalf, with her party, filed out into the corridor.

Her friends crowded about to congratulate her upon her bearing as a witness. Her granddaughters wrapped a long black squirrel-lined cape about her and led her down the big courthouse stairs to where the Jubb automobile awaited them in front of the red brick building. The Jubs were the great people of the Squirrel Hill district. Their house has been one of the first robbed, and they were inclined to give Mrs. Dorcas Metcalf great credit for her single-handed capture of



"Say, do you girls know it's goin' on to ten o'clock an' your grandmother ain't home yet?" Temperance suddenly demanded.

Edward Brannigan. Why, they had two menservants and four maids—to say nothing of a wonderful set of burglar alarms—and they were by purchase entitled to one-third of the services of a special watchman who patrolled the half mile in front of their dwelling, the Weiss', and the Robbins', all night long! And yet they had lost jewelry and silver, lace and furs, up to four thousand dollars, while Grandmother Metcalf! It was really too

wonderful of her, and she simply must use one of the cars to go to and from the courthouse! And grandma, who loved riding in motor cars—though the street cars, too, filled her with pleasure—accepted cheerfully.

"You're coming to the sewing circle this afternoon, Mrs. Metcalf, surely, aren't you?" Mrs. Howson, one of the friends, stood on the curb to ask, while the Jubb chauffeur arrayed fur rugs about the knees of his three passengers. "Of course you girls—bad things!—never come."

"We don't get back from school on Wednesdays until five, you see," explained Virginia for the one-hundredth time. "It's teachers' meeting."

"Oh, yes, I remember! Well, you're coming, aren't you, Mrs. Metcalf! We're doing a layette for one of the mill women. Awfully uninteresting

sewing! Nothing dainty, nothing fragile—everything heavy and plain, to wear and to wash! But if you'll come and tell us all that you had to leave out on the witness stand—just how you felt, and how your scalp rose with terror, and all that—why, we'll have a good time, anyway."

"Yes, I'll come," agreed Grandmother Metcalf, beaming. "Though I really dunno as I left much untold on the witness stand!"

"I believe you, granny!" said Rose, with feeling.

"The sewers meet in the parish house this afternoon, you know," prattled Mrs. Howson. "We're not going around to one another's homes any more. There's sure to be feeling about the elaborateness and expense some women will go to for the tea. But in the parish house it'll be different. And Doctor Bowditch is coming in for half an hour to read a chapter of Ruskin to us. You and he will be the belles of the ball, Mrs. Metcalf."

"I got a real pretty crochet baby jacket I did last winter—white and blue. I didn't know what I was doing it for—I don't seem acquainted in many families that's got the baby habit—but it'll come in handy for this mill baby, and it's real pretty, and I'm glad of it. Wearable and washable are good enough, but a woman wants something pretty for her baby."

Thus grandma, with a little sigh. She knew that Rose and Virginia were the two best girls in the world, but she did wish they would get married and supply her with grandsons-in-law for spoiling and great-grandbabies for cuddling. She herself had obeyed the best traditions of an elder age by marrying at seventeen; Rose's father and Virginia's mother, twins, had been born when she, grandma, had been only eighteen. Naturally it irked her a good deal to see the two girls apparently without a matrimonial inclination in their pretty heads at twenty-five.

The Jubb car—all that was polite that day—left the two girls at the big, new, hundred-thousand-dollar high school of which Fergustown was so proud, before proceeding toward the outskirts of the city.

"Don't stay too late with the sewers and the elocutionary Doctor Bowditch, granny," counseled Virginia. "You'll need to go early to bed after all this excitement."

"A little excitement's good for anybody," stated Mrs. Metcalf, with mild conviction. "I thought I was getting rheumatically before all this happened, but, bless you, I ain't felt a twinge since! Rosie, why don't you ask that nice young Spaniard home to supper with you to-night? He must be real lonesome here, so far from his folks, and we're going to have fried chicken and corn fritters."

"Well, I'm not going to ask him," said Rose firmly. "Now, good-by, dear, and take good care of yourself."

Grandma sighed as the car started away from the high-school building. They were very trying, her dear, good, beautiful, talented girls! They were positively disobedient when it came to the matter of inviting young men out to the house! And how did they expect—

Grandma sighed again. Meantime, Rose, unspearing her hat from her fine-spun, curling black hair, remarked to Virginia, in the unwanted seclusion of the teachers' dressing room:

"Mr. Estabos, indeed! Never again, thank you! Why, granny was so unblushing in her matchmaking that night that I think he's afraid of me yet. I treat him with the most awful frigidity to try to put him at his ease in my presence, but he still eyes me with alarm. It's pitiful the way the old dear works for us, but really, Jinny, I wish some one would tell her that it isn't done any longer—that the lasso has gone out of style in our best circles, and that it's considered good form nowadays for a girl to give a man a chance for his life!"

"Fiddle!" retorted Virginia. "I don't mean about granny's methods," she added hastily. "I mean about Mr. Estabos. He's speechless before you because you've laid him low, that's why! And——"

But what was the use of continuing in that strain to a teacher of algebra

and English history who met the observations with a vulgar "Laid your grandmother low!"

And then Rose added thoughtfully: "But you ought really to oblige granny in the matter of a mate, Jinny. I think you'd be happier married—or, at any rate, in love. You're decreed by nature to be romantic and yearning and all that. So why not marry?"

"Whom?" was all that Virginia answered at first; but it was, taken in connection with her look and tone, an ample statement of her views as to her masculine associates and friends. Then she went on: "Mr. Estabos is the only unmarried man regularly on the faculty, and he's mooning over you. Doctor Bowditch is the most married man in the world, to say nothing of his being fifty-seven and given to elocutionary renderings of our English classics. Doctor Pursey is likewise married and over fifty, and, besides, we never see him since Temperance's broken arm was set; we're such a disgustingly healthy set of females in our house. So whom shall I marry, to gratify granny and to satisfy that yearning you have detected about me?"

"I don't know," Rose admitted lugubriously. "It's a shame! Why don't the fairy stories come true? Why doesn't young Lochinvar come out of the West, or King Cophetua step down off his throne to give you a hand up? Only I suppose, if he did, he'd be fat and gouty and have the habit of falling asleep after dinner when my Lady Virginia would be wanting to walk in the gardens and listen to the nightingales and smell the jasmine! Come on, I'm back in time for History C, worse luck!" And she vanished through the door of the dressing room, leaving the blond Virginia gazing pensively out of the window.

Meantime, Grandmother Metcalf had been deposited safely by the Jubb chauffeur at the door of the comfort-

able wooden house on Winthrop Avenue, with the neat lawn and the neat flower borders, now all carefully tied up in straw. She gave him some excellent advice in regard to the prevention of throat troubles, and mentioned that Temperance Prouty's doughnuts had been famous through the State of Maine and that Temperance always fried them on Wednesday morning; so if he should be passing any time—

And the Jubb chauffeur, who had accepted his assignment to Grandmother Metcalf that day with the scorn that a man hired to drive a high-powered car would naturally have for people who had no car at all, left her thinking that, after all, she was a fine old lady—and a blamed sight more of a lady than some he had known!

Temperance had ministered devotedly to Dorcas Metcalf. Temperance had been with her for thirty years. Temperance had helped her nurse all the sons and daughters who had come back to Middlebury, from wherever they might, to die in the old house on Main Street and to be buried under the fir trees on the hill. Temperance had been with her when Rose's mother and Virginia's mother had come home to bear their babies where so many Metcalfs had been born—in the big, square, sunny room that looked out straight to blue Mount Martin. Temperance was, in short, by virtue of her years of service, the family autocrat.

Just now she decreed that Mrs. Metcalf should divest herself of the black Henrietta, the fichu, the pansies, and should don, for a quiet hour's nap, a quilted silk dressing gown of the most violent purple that had ever assaulted human eyes. Then beef tea and toast were brought to the recumbent heroine of the Brannigan case, and Temperance, sitting down beside her employer, asked for a recital of the events in the court. When her curiosity had been glutted, she lowered the shades, com-

manded Grandmother Metcalf to sleep, and tiptoed creakingly away. And grandma, falling into one of the uneasy dozes, that are the mark of age, had a dream of Brannigan being marched to death, while she herself ran hither and thither interceding for him, saying she was sure it was all a mistake and that she hadn't realized, when she testified against him, that the death penalty was exacted for house-breaking. She awoke in a tremor.

"I'm glad I'm going to the sewers this afternoon," she said to herself. "I want something to change my thoughts. That pore fellow! I don't believe he meant any harm at all! It's a shame they held him! They hadn't a single thing against him except what I told. It's a pity I ever called the police. If I could have had a real good talk with that boy, I reckon we could have got some good out of this."

Then she mused: "We don't need a hired man—leastways not the whole of a hired man. But maybe we could have bought that extra back lot I'm always talking about buying and kept a cow and a few chickens—but I'd have hated to trust anybody with my chicks except myself. Still, there'd have been something to keep him busy all the time. I wish I hadn't called for the police! Or else that I had only said I had forgotten all about everything when they had me on the stand—the same as if I was a railroad president or an oil magnate!"

She frowned and sighed and rubbed her nose with a vexed forefinger, disparaging her lack of foresight in the Brannigan matter. Then she dressed again and set blithely forth for the sewing circle in the church parlors. She forgot the little blue-and-white crochet baby jacket and went back to the door to call to Temperance to bring it to her.

"And, Temperance," she added, "bring down those miniatures of the girls that lady did of them last summer in the White Mountains. I've

promised to show them to Mrs. Bowditch, so's she can get the baby done if she likes 'em."

But even with this diversion of her thoughts, all the while she trotted along the quiet streets of the Squirrel Hill district toward the busy center of the town, that expressive forefinger of hers rubbed her nose many times. Rose and Virginia would have known thereby that Grandmother Metcalf was much perturbed.

"It's a real shame!" grandma murmured, waiting for the trolley tangle in Central Square to clear. Sometimes she did talk to herself, and when the girls caught her at it and rebuked her, she asked pointedly what else she was to do; she'd be glad enough to talk to some one else if they would only provide the other party to the dialogue! "A real shame! I'm sorry I called in the police. They don't understand anything about treating boys. All they want, even the worst of them, is a little mothering."

Mrs. Metcalf had no idea that she was uttering the most advanced penological theory, any more than the most advanced penologists are aware that they are all talking mere sensible grandmotherliness. She shook her head, in its neat pansy-trimmed bonnet.

"I don't believe that Brannigan boy had any more to do with those Squirrel Hill robberies than I had! Holding him for burglaries! They'd've let him go with a fine as a vagrant if it hadn't been they hoped to prove them robberies on him! I could've paid the fine, and—I'm really thinking of buying that other lot, anyway!"

But by this time Grandmother Metcalf was on the street where the First Congregational reared a great many exotic Gothic spires into the gray New England air, and the current of her thoughts was changed.

The meeting of the sewing circle proved very successful, despite the un-

interesting nature of the work to be done for the mill-district mother. Mrs. Metcalf told the assembled ladies once again exactly how she had felt when her sharp old ears had detected that little sound in the hall, and exactly how she had felt as she had locked the linen-closet door and telephoned for the police.

"But I declare to goodness," she asseverated warmly, "I'd never have done it if I'd seen him first! He ain't more'n a boy—and he looks hungry, like what he said, and cold. I had ought to have looked at him and talked to him before I got the police over there. Once you call them in, you can't do anything your own way any more."

"Oh, but Mrs. Metcalf! How rash, how foolish, you would have been! He would have killed you—well, anyway, wounded you. They're desperate, men like that. Did you read about that terrible murder down in Worcester last winter? Oh, you did just right!" Thus the ladies.

Grandmother rubbed her nose vexedly.

"I dunno," she said. "I don't believe that boy would've hurt a cat. Leastways he wouldn't before those police got hold of him. Here comes Doctor Bowditch."

And with Doctor Bowditch's arrival, conversation drifted away from Big Brannigan and Grandmother Metcalf to "The Everlasting Mercy," which the clergyman read very effectively to his rapt audience. He had, he said, decided not to read Ruskin that day. "For do we not all know our Ruskin? But this young man, this new poet, Masefield, some of you may not as yet have met. I feel it a privilege to introduce him to you."

"Well," Grandmother Metcalf confided to Mrs. Howson, as they walked together through the amethyst mists of the twilight toward the square, where their ways parted, "if that's modern

poetry, ancient poetry's good enough to last out my time! About people as common as the dirt under your feet! About people you wouldn't let sit at your table! I don't judge, that I be not judged, and maybe that feller that the poem was supposed to be about wasn't to blame altogether for what he was. He mightn't have had good home influences. But such as he was, I think that this Mr. Masefield might be in better business than writing poetry about him, and Doctor Bowditch in better business than reading it."

"Perhaps you're right." Mrs. Howson repressed a giggle; she greatly enjoyed Grandma Metcalf's literary observations. Then she paused and frowned. "I just hate to leave you here," she said, "but I've got to hurry home and fix Walter's supper. It's the girl's afternoon out. Oughtn't you to take a car? It's a long walk over to Squirrel Hill."

They had reached Central Square, that noisy maze of lights from which the quiet streets radiated in all directions.

"Tain't more'n a mile and a half. I feel it does me good to walk."

"But you've had a tiring day, dear Mrs. Metcalf. And I always think that the streets are more dangerous at this time of half lights than after the real dark has come."

"Oh, I'm real careful!" declared Grandmother Metcalf, a little impatiently. She did dislike the persistent oversight that the girls and their friends imposed upon her. "I ain't quite decrepit yet!"

"No, but you——"

"Now, you run along home and get Mr. Howson's supper ready!" commanded grandmother briskly. "A man don't like to be kept waiting, and it ain't right he should have to be. I took care of myself enough sight of years before you young folks come along,

and I guess I can do it a while longer. Thank you just the same. Good night."

"Well, good night," said Mrs. Howson reluctantly, and turned from the bright lights of the square into the dimness of a side street electrically lighted at long spaces.

After she had gone a few steps, something impelled her to turn around to see if grandma had successfully negotiated the interweaving of tracks and the blinding glitter of trolley headlights. She marked the old-fashioned, erect little figure threading the tangle, and rejoiced to note that it was under masculine protection. A young man, not much taller than Mrs. Metcalf herself, was piloting her across the street.

"Oh, she's met some one she knows," said Mrs. Howson to herself. "I'm so glad." She smiled affectionately at the thought of Grandmother Metcalf, and hurried light-heartedly on toward her own house. "I bet she'll try to make him go home to supper with her—if he's not married! How wild she does make the girls with her funny, palpable little matchmaking schemes!"

CHAPTER V.

"It must have been Doctor Bowditch."

Virginia Black, very fair and flower-like in a pale-blue challie wrapper—the two teachers always took their dinner at ease in negligee after the ordeal of the Wednesday teachers' meetings—made the observation to Rose, in something loose and sprigged and ribboned, at the other end of the table.

"If it was, he wasn't usin' his pulpit voice," said Temperance, standing austere at one side, a platter containing the remnants of the fried chicken and corn fritters in her hand.

"Well, whom did it sound like, Temperance?"

"How should I know? I don't hear so many men's voices, do I?"

Temperance, albeit herself an uncom-

promising spinster of fifty bleak autumns, adopted Grandmother Metcalf's own reproachful manner of speaking to the girls about their lack of masculine appendages. She even accentuated it. What was reproach in granny became bitter accusation from Temperance.

"It must have been some one she knows awfully well," said Rose. "Tell us again, Temperance, exactly what he said, whoever he was."

Temperance placed the platter on the sideboard and "crumbed" the dining table with force enough to sweep a floor before she answered. Then, again erect and motionless, she repeated the story she had already once recounted:

"It was five-twenty by my alarm clock, settin' on the kitchen shelf—that don't keep none too good time, so it might have been five or ten minutes one way or the other."

"Yes, yes," cried Virginia impatiently.

"I'm tellin' it as Rose asked me, Virginia," said Temperance coldly. "If you don't want to hear it——"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Tempy!"

"Very well. I grant you grace. It was five-twenty by my alarm clock when I heard the telephone ring. I noticed particularly, because I had just put spice cakes in the oven an' was lookin' to see the time, same as any halfway decent cook. I heard the telephone bell, an' I said:

"'Drat it! Why did we ever have that contraption put in, to be interuptin' a person at their work every minute?' An' I went to answer it.

"'Hello, hello!' I says, an', 'Hello! Is this Mrs. Dorcas Metcalf's house?' says a man's voice. Kind of a pleasant voice it was, too.

"I admitted it was her house, an' he says that he's Mr. Something-or-other—I didn't get the name—might have been Mulligan."

"Mulligan! She doesn't know any Mulligan!"

"Or Muller or Mullins or Lawrence or——"

"Lawrence! Temperance, how can you? Mulligan and Lawrence don't sound in the very least alike!" cried Rose despairingly.

"Or O'Brien or Jubb," continued the relentless Temperance. "I tell you I couldn't make a thing out of it. I said:

"What name? I didn't get it."

"But he goes right on, manlike: 'Mrs. Metcalf is goin' to have supper with us—my wife an' me—to-night, an' wanted me to phone you. Tell the young ladies we'll bring her home early.'"

"An' I says: 'What name did you say?'"

"But there was that confounded whirrin' in my ear for a minute, an' then no sound at all, an' I shook the receiver—like I've seen you do, Jinny, when you lose your temper—an' I said:

"Central, you've cut me off."

"An' she said: 'What number do you want?'"

"An' I said: 'You've cut me off.'"

"An' she said: 'Scuse it, please. Filocateit, I'll call you.'" Temperance gave a very creditable imitation of the operator under certain conditions. "An' I went back to my spice cakes. I'll get you some now." And she disappeared into the pantry.

"It may have been Mr. Howson. Rita may have wanted her for supper," speculated Rose.

"It isn't a bit like granny," grumbled Virginia. "I don't remember that she ever did such a thing before in all the time we've lived in Fergustown. Even in Middlebury, she never stayed away except when somebody was sick."

"Well, I'm glad she's doing it," cried Rose. "She's younger than either of us, Jinny, and it's a good thing if she can have a little young life sometimes—an occasional unexpected supper party and the like!"

"It's been a great day for granny, all

right." Virginia smiled as she spoke.

"A morning in court, an afternoon at the sewing circle, and supper at somebody's house! I only hope she won't be too tired."

"Well," said Temperance, placing the spice cakes before Virginia and a glass dish of preserves before Rose, "she'll have all day to-morrow to rest up in, won't she? You don't want to try to boss your grandmother so much, you girls. She's got a right to——"

"Live her own life?" caroled Rose.

"Well, so she has, Tempy. You're right."

Their supper over, the two girls sought the sitting room. Opposite a fireplace, with the neatest of sticks laid pyramidically behind the most effulgent of brasses, stood a big, old-fashioned davenport. Behind it, again, was a long table with a lamp at either end. Rose laid a match to the fire. Virginia lit the lamps.

"Temperance will make an awful row about our little blaze," remarked Rose. "She thinks that fireplaces were made for the display of geometric designs in pine and birch."

"And granny will want to know why we lit both lamps, when one would answer perfectly," chanted Virginia. "We'll tell her it was because we needed lots of illumination to cheer us up in her absence—and it won't be such a whopper, either! Doesn't the place seem empty without her?"

"Tomblike," Rose agreed, settling herself comfortably in one corner of the davenport.

An hour passed, the pleasant silence of the house scarcely broken, now by the fall of a log on the hearth, now by Temperance's step in the pantry, or by an occasional reverberation of her voice raised in dismal song. "There is a fountain filled with blo-od, filled with blo-od, filled with blo-od!" she asseverated nasally in the kitchen, and now and again the echo was borne to the



"Gimme a drink," whispered Oscar unsteadily. "Oh, for God's sake, gimme a drink! She's coming around!"

sitting room. Grandmother Metcalf's yellow cat, Topaz, who had been tagging Temperance's footsteps ever since the butcher had delivered the chicken in the morning, finally made a stately, full-fed entrance into the sitting room and took his position in the center of the hearthrug.

Another hour passed.

"Say, do you girls know it's goin' on to ten o'clock an' your grandmother ain't home yet?" Temperance suddenly demanded, appearing in the doorway. "I never knew her to stay away from home like this, an' I've known her now for more than thirty years."

The brown eyes and the blue were raised toward the clock ticking away upon the mantelshelf. Temperance had spoken truly. It was twenty minutes before ten.

"Of course," said Rose, in extenuating tones, "granny doesn't realize that we don't know where she is. She

doesn't realize that Temperance didn't get the man's name——"

"I'd have liked to see you get it, either!" interrupted the sensitive handmaiden. "You may be very used to hearin' children whisper in school an' all that, Rosy, but you couldn't have made out what he was sayin' a bit better than I did, an' that's all there is about it."

"Why, Temperance, Rose didn't mean to say that you were careless or anything like that!" cried Virginia. "She only meant that grandma, of course, thought we knew just where she was. It wasn't Doctor Pursey, was it, Temper?"

"No. I'd know his voice among a thousand, him settin' my arm an' all, an' taking as good care of me as if I owned all the Jubb house. No, it wasn't Doctor Pursey."

"Besides, grandma doesn't know Mrs. Pursey. She couldn't be gone

there for supper." Thus Rose, thoughtfully.

"That's so. But then she's a sort of public character to-day and might be taken home to supper by comparative strangers."

"She wouldn't go, Jinny, really she wouldn't. Of course, she's the most friendly thing in the world, and doesn't realize that there is any one in all Fergustown who could possibly hold himself higher than she does. Still, I don't believe she'd go off to supper with a stranger, even in her public character."

"Oh, of course, not with a stranger. Temperance, you go to bed. We'll wait up for granny."

"Well," Temperance wavered. "I am tired," she admitted. "Cleaned out the attic this afternoon. But I kind of hate to go without seein' her safe home."

Virginia broke into a laugh.

"Aren't we ridiculous?" she demanded. "A vigorous, active, intelligent lady of sixty-five decides to take supper with friends, in the quietest, best-behaved little city on the continent, and we're acting as if she had decided to go on a polar relief expedition! It only shows in what a dreadful rut we're living. Go to bed, Tempy."

"Well, I guess I will. You might call up the back stairs to me when she comes. Don't you be afraid of wakin' me. I shan't be asleep as soon as all that. You'd better keep the kettle on. A glass of hot lemonade will be good for her when she comes in. It's freshened up considerable this evening an' it's cold. Put the cat out in the kitchen when you lock up."

She departed stiffly, and the girls settled back among their cushions. Virginia resumed her novel; Rose fished her crochet work out of a bag on the table behind her. But they kept glancing at the clock. At half past ten, Rose said determinedly:

"I'm going to call up Doctor Bow-

ditch. It may have been he, even if he wasn't using his pulpit voice."

"Granny'll be put out if we spread the impression that we think she needs looking after. You know how spunky she is."

"I don't care," declared Rose. "I'm worried and that's the truth."

She marched into the hall, where the telephone was, and called Doctor Bowditch's number. After an interminable time, it seemed to her, a sleepy feminine voice answered her.

"Oh, Mrs. Bowditch, I'm so sorry. I'm sure I waked you up. It's Rose Metcalf speaking. Grandmother—grandmother didn't have supper with you to-night, did she? . . . I was afraid not. She's had supper somewhere. . . . Temperance didn't get the name. . . . I'm so sorry to have waked you. Good night."

"Call up Rita Howson," commanded Virginia, who had come to the sitting-room door. "She was going to the sewing circle this afternoon, don't you remember?"

"Yes. No. 113, Party W please. Of course, if they were playing cards or anything, half past ten wouldn't be late at all. Only— Is this No. 113, Party W? Oh, Mr. Howson, is that you? This is Miss Metcalf. . . . No—Metcalf . . . M-e-t-c-a. . . . Yes, yes. Mr. Howson, is my grandmother there with you? . . . No? Well, may I speak to Mrs. Howson? She was at the sewing circle and may know with whom our adventurous granny *did* go to supper."

And she told him the tale of the telephone message Temperance had received.

Snatched from a hot bath, Rita Howson took her dripping place at the telephone.

"So sorry to keep you waiting, Rose. I was in the tub. . . . Oh, no! Big, woolly bath robe. . . . I shan't catch cold. . . . Mrs. Met-

calf and I left the parish house together. We were about the last. We stayed to pack the box for Mrs. Nigrelli and to direct it, so that it could be sent the first thing in the morning. We walked as far as Central Square together. She was going home then, and I wanted to go part way with her, but I couldn't. Had to hurry home to get Walter's supper. She expected to go straight home when she left me, but she evidently met some friend. Indeed, I'm sure she did, for I turned around to see how she made out crossing the tracks at the square and I saw a young man piloting her over. . . . No, I didn't recognize him. I was away in on Locust Street by that time, and it was dark, anyway. . . . I don't know how I knew he was young—his back just looked young—or the way he took care of her or something. Don't you girls worry about her, Rose. She can take care of herself; never fear. She enjoys men, you know. She isn't like you bad girls." And that conversation closed in an exchange of badinage.

"We've got to remember," insisted Virginia, when they went back to the davenport, "that she thinks we know exactly where she is, and with whom. It's ridiculous—it's positively asinine—to be worried."

"Perfectly asinine," agreed Rose with a splendid simulation of belief.

At twelve o'clock Grandmother Metcalf had not returned. Temperance, singularly awe-inspiring in a gray flannel dressing sack, a red flannel petticoat, and a crocheted turban of dingy white, which was her compromise between a lately acquired belief in fresh air and a lifelong disbelief in "night air," had come downstairs and announced that she would not go to bed again until she knew her mistress' whereabouts. Fear pressed upon them all. It was Temperance who gave it a name.

"That Brannigan may be locked up,"

she said darkly, "an' he may pretend he has got no friends. But who's goin' to believe him? The police don't. An' if he's got friends——"

"Nonsense, Temperance!" quavered Rose. "I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to telephone to every one we know in Fergustown. She's at a party at somebody's house, and I'm going to find out where."

"Yes, do," cried Virginia. "I'll go through the telephone book and give you the names and numbers."

"I'd call the police," said Temperance sepulchraly.

"Nonsense, Temperance!" cried Rose again, this time more assuredly. "What an old croaker you are!"

"The Ames, 23, Party J," called out Virginia.

And then began the game of rousing many respectable, deeply slumberous Fergustonians from their beds and making them declare their ignorance of Grandmother Metcalf's whereabouts in tones varying from relief that the message did not announce disaster to them to indignation that they had been called for anything less.

Though Fergustown was by no means a big city, and though the Metcalf circle of acquaintance in it was limited, such are the delays attendant upon routing an early retiring population from its bed between midnight and dawn that it was nearly two o'clock before Rose replied to Virginia's "Y—the Youngs, 283, and we don't know a single Z," with "Yes, but the Youngs have gone to Washington. They went this forenoon. Alice Grant told me."

"Maybe you'll telephone the police now," said Temperance.

She spoke grimly, as if her chief emotion were resentment because her suggestion had not been adopted earlier. But her face was gray with anxiety. And while Rose was calling for police headquarters, she said, with a hoarse sort of sob, to Virginia:

"To think of me lettin' him get off without givin' his name so's I could understand it!"

"But, Tempy dear," said Virginia, patting the gray flannel shoulder, "if— if he was—an impostor, he wouldn't have told you, don't you see?"

"Chief Dorley's going to send a detective right out here," announced Rose, hanging up the receiver.

"Out here! What for?" demanded Temperance fiercely. "Didn't you tell him she wasn't here?"

"Yes. But—— I don't know why! Oh, I don't know anything! But he's going to send a detective here."

Mr. Winders, who presently arrived at the little house on Winthrop Avenue, was a product of metropolitan training. He had served in the New York detective bureau during a famous, or rather infamous, period of its existence, and his surmises in regard to any case were always heavily tinged with the color of his past experiences. To-night he fixed the frightened girls with a knowing look from a pair of protuberant brown eyes, and asked:

"Had any words with your grandma?"

"You mean had we any quarrel with our grandmother?" asked Rose, who recovered the power of articulation sooner than Virginia.

"Yep. The old lady—was she a bit strict, now? Did she object to any of your sweethearts or anything of that kind?"

"Look here, you Mr. Whatever-your-name-is," struck in Temperance beligerently—she had donned the habiliments of day and was chaperoning the girls zealously—"what do you mean by passin' any such remarks? These young ladies haven't got no sweethearts——"

"Then the boys certainly ain't what they were in my young days," stated the flattering Mr. Winders, with emphasis and a leer.

"Will you come back to the question, if you please?" said Virginia haughtily.

"What I want to know is why didn't you notify headquarters when your grandma first disappeared?" demanded Mr. Winders tartly, angered that his gallantry should be rebuffed.

Rose patiently explained again that the false telephone message had kept them from feeling any anxiety until late in the evening.

"Humph!" grunted the detective reflectively. "When you didn't recognize the name or anything! It's funny——"

"Is there a record of telephone calls kept?" asked Virginia. "Could we find out from what number that call for our house came yesterday evening?"

"That's a good idea," said Mr. Winders. "If you're sure there was a telephone call." And he glared at Temperance, who glared back again.

"You know," went on Rose, "my grandmother had been in court yesterday morning as a witness against this man they call Big Brannigan. If, as they seem to think at headquarters, he's one of a gang——" Her voice faltered and refused to go on with the possibilities in that case.

"Oh, he's one of a gang all right, all right," asserted Mr. Winders with easy assurance. "But I don't think it's likely that his pals would try to put over anything like this just now. It wouldn't be safe. Too much public interest. Still, you can't tell. They're holding him on the charge of these other burglaries out here, and maybe—— Yes, there's something in that notion. Your grandma would be an important—— Well, don't you worry, young ladies! We'll get her back, don't you fear. Dead or alive——"

Virginia interrupted his cheerful prognostications with a groan. He glanced at her in astonishment and then amended his speech.

"Oh, I don't mean that I think she's been made away with. It's possible, of

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course, but it ain't likely. She didn't carry any great sum of money on her person, you say, and wore no jewelry worth murder. Oh, no! I don't think she's been made away with. Only put where she can be kept quiet for a while. Or maybe she's gone off of her own accord. Was she ever at all flighty? Sometimes old folks get sort of flighty. Why, I've known times in New York City when there was almost as many lost old ladies—old country ladies who had come away from home in a pet at their folks, you understand—in a police court as there were—other kinds of ladies! They'd get mad with their old men, or their children or their grandchildren wouldn't treat them the way they wanted to be treated, and they'd sneak the egg money and start out for New York. And there the police would find them wandering around, lost old souls, and they wouldn't tell nothing about themselves 'cept that they were lost—they'd be afraid the police would communicate with their folks, you know—and they'd spend a night in a cell rather than let on who they were. A little nutty, of course, the way old people get to be—"

"Mrs. Metcalf is not in the least 'nutty,' as you call it," said Virginia Black with great distinctness. "She's an active and highly intelligent lady. It's absurd to spin these ridiculous theories about her case."

"Oh, is it?" said Mr. Winders, rising and jamming his derby down over his forehead. "You think so because you haven't had no experience. There ain't a theory in this world that's ridiculous to a detective! Nothing's ridiculous until it's been proved false. Well, I'll be saying good night—or good morning. The chief telephoned to both the stations to have the outgoing trains watched—"

"But that was after they—the kidnapers or whatever they are—had eight hours' start!" cried Rose spiritedly.

"They wouldn't keep her waiting in a railroad station for eight hours."

"They mightn't and then again they might. You never can tell," insisted this most open-minded of detectives. "Anyway, he telegraphed to the terminals in New York and Boston, too, and to some of the big stations along the line. You'll hear something in the morning, believe me! And we'll get the dope on that telephone call. Cheer up! It'll be all right."

And he swaggered out of the house into the blackness of the hour preceding the first gray of dawn. The girls looked at each other with smiles that would come, despite their anxiety and their conviction that this gentleman was scarcely to be trusted to bring them happily out of their troubles.

"Awful person!" cried Rose. "Like something in the movies. Oh, Jinny, how furious granny will be when she comes home in the morning from spending the night with a sick friend and finds that we didn't get her message right and that we actually called in the police! Furious!"

"She'll be wild," agreed Virginia, trying to smile courageously at Rose, trying to believe that this might indeed be the explanation of Grandmother Metcalf's disappearance. But the smile refused to blossom. She broke into sudden tears, and with her head upon her cousin's shoulder, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"S-sh, honey, sh-sh!" whispered Rose, patting Virginia's shoulder maternally and resolutely blinking back her own tears. "S-sh! We'll be laughing over this before we're twelve hours older!"

"Of course we will be!" sniffed Temperance Prouty. "An' now I'm goin' to pour a little sherry wine down all our throats an' send us all to bed. We'll need our strength for what we've got to go through."

And she marshalled her little flock

out into the dining room, which wore such a changed aspect since the time when they had sat there over their chicken and corn fritters, just a few hours ago.

"I wish I had asked Mr. Estabos home to supper, as she wanted me to," mourned Rose. "For then she would have been sure to come home——"

"I wish I had always done everything she wanted me to do," cried Virginia. "No girls ever had such a wonderful grandmother before."

"Drink this, an' stop talkin' like you thought she was dead!" commanded Temperance Prouty. "There's no good wastin' all them funeral sentiments on a woman that's as alive as I know Dorcas Metcalf is this minute!"

But at that minute Dorcas Metcalf was scarcely so active as her faithful handmaiden, firm in her creed of the power of faith, was determined to believe.

CHAPTER VI.

Doctor Oscar Vail, unwontedly white, his fringe of blond hair damp about his forehead, his round blue eyes fixed in an expression of fright that threatened to be permanent, made his appearance in the somewhat gloomy library of a New York country house near the Massachusetts line at about the same moment when the granddaughters of Dorcas Metcalf were swallowing their sherry under the direction of Temperance Prouty. Two young men awaited him, Leonard Greer and Tommy Fraser. On young Mr. Greer's countenance the customary look of gloom had deepened to stoic despair. Mr. Fraser, who was a brown and ruddy young man, evidently intended by kindly nature for pleasure, wore the look of a badly frightened rabbit.

"Well?" inquired both these young men at once, the speed with which they hurled the interrogative monosyllable at Doctor Vail not detracting in the

least from the impression it conveyed of sheer terror.

"Gimme a drink," whispered Oscar unsteadily. "Oh, for God's sake gimme a drink! She's coming around!"

The other young men gasped as if in relief, and poured generous drinks for themselves from the heavy cut-glass decanter on the huge mahogany table.

"Gad, I've been seeing State's prison in my mind's eye!" murmured Mr. Fraser, as he gulped the potent fluid.

"State's prison! I've been seeing the chair!" said Oscar Vail, still panting a trifle, as if from a race with fear.

"You're sure she's come out?" asked Greer.

"Sure. I knew she must come out—her heart was right as a trivet. I knew she must. But she was so darned slow about it. That was what got my goat. Tommy, pour me another drink."

"Don't you do it, Tommy," commanded Leonard Greer, taking the decanter by its neck and removing it from his more obliging friend's reach. "Vail can't be allowed to get soused. If there should be any change in the old lady and he was out of commission, will you kindly tell me where we would be—you and I?"

"Or the old girl herself, for that matter," said Mr. Fraser, acquiescing in the prohibition of liquor to the doctor.

"I tell you she's all right," protested that injured gentleman. "And I need a drink a blamed sight more than either of you think. Gosh, if you knew what I've been through these two hours! She ought to have come out from under the influence at midnight at the latest. It simply *couldn't* keep any one doped any longer! It *couldn't*—and it did! Here it's after two. I've got to have some more whisky, I tell you. I shan't even feel it. You know a man suffering from shock can pour it in by the quart without noticing it. Gimme a drink."

They relented, after a look at the earnest, piteous appeal on his round

'face, into which the color was slowly returning.

"But you're sure about her?" persisted the gloomy Greer.

"Yes, yes, yes! Can't you hear me tell you 'yes?' I'm sure. She's come out of unconsciousness, and she's asked a few questions, and she's dropped off into a perfectly natural sleep. I sat by her for twenty minutes, counting her respirations, before I dared to believe it, before I dared to believe that I was not fated to end up in the electric chair. Funny thing. That mixture never even fazed Donald Grey. Remember, Len? He was as lively and obstreperous after we'd administered the dope as he was before, and we had to depend entirely on our strong-arm work in the end. I tell you, it couldn't hurt a cat!"

"Being a physician, of course you would be the last to realize that there might be differences of constitution between a football freshman president of nineteen years at Bournemouth College and an old lady of over sixty! I'll take you on for a doctor, I don't think!" Thus Mr. Greer, whose apprehensions of the last hour and a half had, in departing, left him resentful toward the gentleman whom he somewhat unjustly regarded as their sole author.

"But I tell you the mixture is harmless! You could have a heart with no better action than a secondhand jitney bus and it wouldn't hurt you! You don't suppose I'd take chances on giving the old lady anything to put her out of business, really? Why, the very foundation principle on which this expedition was undertaken was 'Safety first!' Gimme a——"

"Don't you do it, Tommy. Go and listen at her door."

Tommy tiptoed carefully out of the room and listened at the door of the room across the hall. Then he tiptoed back, a look of deep, almost spiritual, satisfaction on his merry, handsome tanned face.

"She's sleeping like one of those babies in a ballad—you know, with angels hovering above the crib, and mothers bending over its side. It's the sweetest music I ever listened to—that snore of hers."

"Is she snoring?" cried Oscar, jumping up. "Is her breathing stertorous?"

"Stertorous nothing! It's just a nice, even breathing—just loud enough to hear comfortably when you insert your ear into her room. Smooth as velvet, regular as the cat purring on the rug— Gosh, fellows, but we are in luck! Suppose——"

"Suppose nothing!" cried Doctor Vail with unprofessional fierceness. "How often do you want me to repeat it? The stuff couldn't do any permanent injury to a baby? Am I the material they make murderers out of? Do I or don't I know anything about the action of drugs——"

"Question, question!" called Tommy.

"It couldn't hurt her," insisted the aroused physician. "It couldn't hurt any one."

"That's all right," observed Mr. Greer, "but how do you know the drug was pure? Fooling with drugs and chemicals is a dangerous business. It might develop entirely different qualities when it was old or adulterated. Don't you remember that stuff old Hyde used to take in 'Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' and how——"

"That was a novel," insisted Oscar.

"Well, it was a novel based on a few facts," Greer pointed out. "And suppose your dope had changed properties on you? Suppose it had grown bad with age. Suppose——"

"Suppose you fellows go to bed," interrupted Oscar. "I'll watch until seven o'clock, and then you two can get up and let me hit the hay. I tell you I'll need a little sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care——"

"Will you two fellows kindly remember that I am unacquainted with every-



"Doctor Vail, I'm getting real worried. I want you should tell me the truth. Is—~~are—was—~~ was it really pneumonia I had, and not something dreadful catching and fatal?"

thing that preceded your arrival here at midnight with that poor, old, inert bundle of a woman?" said Leonard Greer. "I'd like to know a little something about the facts in the case before the police arrive. How did you find her? How did you persuade her to step into the car with you? Which of you was it that accomplished that? It's all very well to tell me to go up to bed and snatch a few hours' sleep, but I want to know a little something before I do anything of the sort. The raveled sleeve of care! How do you suppose I've been feeling, alone here in this musty old vault, waiting to be called in as accessory to——"

"Accessory?" The other two shot the word at him with scornful vigor. "Accessory?"

"Well, principal—sole instigator—anything you please!" cried the badgered Mr. Greer. "At any rate, let me

hear the story of the events in Fergus-town, can't you?"

"Tommy, get some sardines out of the cupboard and some crackers, and make some coffee, will you?" commanded Doctor Vail, in the manner of a pasha, "and we'll gratify the curiosity of our grouching friend here."

Tommy went to the curved corner cupboard, which should have been used only for the display of ancient luster and Staffordshire, and produced from the miscellaneous assortment of tins there displayed the ones that Doctor Vail had designated. There was an alcohol lamp of nickel on the table, with a blue enamel skillet set above the wick. Tommy manipulated this with the skill and expedition of a youth not unaccustomed to the chafing dish, and when the water started toward boiling, wielded a can opener with dexterity.

"As an opener, Tommy, you're un-

rivalled," said Oscar Vail, with deep admiration. "When your relatives stop dying and leaving you fortunes, and when nature—your nature—has taken its course with the wealth you have acquired from them, you can always get a job as a waiter."

Tommy reddened, not altogether happily. He had had little sleep for several nights, and his temper was a bit uncertain.

"Aw, let up on me and my general uselessness, can't you? I can do things with my hands that you can't with yours, for all you fancy you would make such a damned fine surgeon."

"Who ever said——" began Oscar, flushing in his turn.

"Oh, every jackanapes of a medical student thinks that surgery is going to be his pie to cut!"

"And what's the little talent that your fingers are so blamed clever with?" sneered Oscar, preferring not to go on with the surgical aspect of the case.

"Wait until I can get hold of a lump of clay, and I'll show you," said Tommy, cheerful again as the kettle began to sing. "I'll model your comical mug!"

"Mike Angelo! Get onto that, Leonard—a sculptor in our midst!" cried Oscar.

"What I'm waiting to find in our midst," stated Leonard with great exasperation, "is a sane human being who can tell me what happened after I was dumped in this tomb."

"Tomb? That's not a polite way to talk of one of Tommy's ancestral estates. Mind your manners, Leonard!"

Leonard looked about him for something throwable, but the big, musty old room was deficient in small articles that could be hurled easily. Oscar put up a protecting arm against the missile that didn't come, and began his narrative.

"Well, let's see. Where shall I begin?"

"You needn't recall Copper to me, or Miss Minerva Whittelsey, or old Kerry Porter, or Lawson's *Fergustown Morning Sun*, you know," said Leonard, "or Adam and Eve in the Garden, or even Noah and the Flood——"

"He couldn't shake the religious myths when he shook religion," commented Oscar in an aside. "Say, Tommy, is the condensed milk holding out? Good for you! Gimme a pen-knife, will you? I'll ladle some out of the can——"

"You needn't remind me," pursued Leonard, "that we set sail for Omaha, and found Tommy Fraser, and told him the disaster that had overtaken his two hundred and fifty, and how the finger of fate and the long arm of coincidence and all that sort of thing were fairly pushing us toward a new business operation. You needn't remind me how Tommy saw that undertaking in its true colors—a beautiful piece of adventure, a romantic enterprise, vastly more entertaining and not a bit more chancy than staking claims or shipping arms to South American republics or—anything. And how he said that he was in on it for the pure sport of the thing—that he had gone stale just motoring and aviating and chorus girling, and needed a bracer. You don't need to tell me that, Oscar, for I was there when it happened."

"And I was there when he looked up Fergustown, Massachusetts, in the map in the new 'Century Dictionary' in his library that had never been opened before, and saw that it lay due east from Fraserville, New York, where, that very week, old Uncle Thaddeus Fraser, last of the New York line, had cashed in, leaving vast possessions to Tommy, here, including this mausoleum." Leonard favored the dark dining room with a look of extreme disapprobation.

"You needn't tell me how we all saw in this circumstance a further pointing of the finger of destiny. You needn't

tell me how we came as far east as Rochester in a comfortable Pullman train, as guests of this noblest rich man—eating all we wanted, attended by dusky servitors who had none of Minerva's peculiarities of dinner-table conversation— You needn't tell me that, Oscar! I know it. I was there. And after two years in Copper Junction, I humbly thank my guiding star that I *was* there. You needn't tell me how Tommy bought a new car in Rochester, and how we came on to this"—again he glared at the room—"this jail, in it. Or how he stocked this place up with canned and bottled goods, after he had talked with Uncle Thad's lawyers in the town, or how you and he left me here to fix the place up for—"

"And a lot of fixing you've done, I don't think!" interpolated Vail. "Say, Leonard, where did you get your idea of a cheery, homelike, clean dwelling? Who made you such a past master in the arts of comfort?"

"You needn't tell me anything about all of that," said Leonard, ignoring his friend's irony, "because I know it all. But I'd like to know exactly what happened between Monday morning, when you glided silently down Uncle Thad's half mile of hemlock-bordered drive—your uncle was strong on graveyard effects in horticulture, wasn't he, Tommy?—to eleven o'clock of a Wednesday night, when you come gliding back with what I thought was a corpse in the tonneau with you."

"I wish you wouldn't use such blamed unpleasant language, Greer," said Doctor Vail offensively.

"Well, all I have to say is *you* spend two days alone in this family burying plot and see how you feel about unconscious old ladies afterward!" advised Leonard.

"You tell him about the Fergustown end of it, Tommy," said Oscar. "I want to smoke without anything on my mind."

"The deuce you do! How about me?"

"Take turns, take turns!" cried Leonard impatiently. "Do it alphabetically if you can't do it any better way. Tommy, you're first."

"Well," said Tommy, "it was like this. We glided out of here, as you say, on Monday morning. It was a pretty morning, too," he added reflectively. "Light frost whitening everything, leaves red and gold and all that, distant hills blue—"

"Thought you were going in for sculpture. Cut out the word painting," advised Oscar, between whiffs of his pipe.

"We let her out for all she was worth," Tommy went on obediently, dropping description for unadorned narrative. "And, say, she's some goer, that little car! We got breakfast—it was a pretty poor one—at a place near the State line. Then we whizzed on toward Fergustown. We didn't go clear in. We put up in a hamlet about six miles this side of it. Thought it would be better for us not to be seen in Fergustown before—the event. So we stopped off in— What was the name of that hole, Oscar?"

"Wallace Bridge."

"Pretended that something had gone wrong with the car—had to have a sane excuse for stopping off in such a hole as Wallace Bridge. The population helped us out—bloody bandits who try to make what they can out of stranded travelers. So the blacksmith—he's the garage, too—pretended to agree with us that there was something broken with the machinery, but said he had to send to Worcester for the piece to repair it. Telegraphed, he said. So we fumed and fussed, and he stood in with the boarding house where he got us quartered for a day or two. And we took a trolley trip into Fergustown and found out that Oscar's calculations had worked to a T. The old lady was to

testify to the grand jury on Wednesday morning about the fellow that had broken into her house, and the grand jury was going to try to connect him with a whole series of robberies and to hold him for them. Hurray!

"Then Oscar and I found—to the blacksmith's astonishment—that there wasn't so much the matter with the car after all, and that we could go on with it, south toward New York, that very day. We compensated every one for having allowed us to live—when they could, of course, have made away with us and taken our watches and the gold fillings out of our teeth, if they hadn't been such fine, honest villagers—and we got out of the place. We drove the car up into a sort of cow-track lane we had discovered four miles or so on the road toward Fergustown, and there we left it, locked, while we went to the hearing. We imprinted the old lady's features on our hearts—and everything else that we thought might be useful. And dogging her steps, we found out that she was going to sewing circle that afternoon.

"Then we went back and brought the car out, and about four o'clock we made our first noticeable appearance in Fergustown. Observe our skill, Leonard. No hangers-on at hotels or garages in Fergustown could ever recall, when Mrs. Dorcas Metcalf disappeared, that two strangers had been lurking about the neighborhood for days with no ostensible business!"

"Oh, yes, you were marvelously cunning!" sneered Greer.

"Maybe you think you could have done it better?" inquired Oscar hostilely.

"Say, what's the matter with you fellows?" demanded the gentleman who had financed the undertaking for the pure love of sport. "This lark has come pretty near to being serious already. There's no good taking all the fun out of it by snarling."

"I guess we're all feeling the strain our nerves were under before the old lady came out of her trance," said Leonard, half apologetically. "And I will confess that while I sat around here in your defunct uncle's old gloom inducer of a house, Tommy, I couldn't see this enterprise just as I had seen it when we talked it over out there in Copper and in your diggings in Omaha. We're not freshmen any longer, or sophs, and even if we were, the old lady is no upper or under classman. I admit the thing looks crazy to me, now that we're in too deep to back out. For instance, to begin with, there's that crazy, conceited idea of Vail's that he can always wind an old lady around his little finger, and that this Mrs. Metcalf is going to fall for his fat, cherubic charms and set us up in life on account of them—"

"You cut out personalities, Greer. If you've got cold feet, get out. We won't stop you, will we, Tommy?"

"Oh, Greer doesn't want to get out," said the pacific Tommy. "This is a gloomy old cave of Uncle Thad's, and it's got on his nerves. I don't blame him. Let me go on with the tale.

"I found the old lady's telephone number in the book, and a little after five I telephoned out that granny wouldn't be home to supper—those granddaughters are wrapped up in her; you could see it at the court—so that they wouldn't be worried about her, you understand, and send out a general fire and burglar alarm if she didn't show up. I thought of that," continued Tommy proudly, "and it must have saved us hours in being suspected."

"And while Tommy was doing that, I was haunting the neighborhood of the First Congregational parish house as if I were a murderer revisiting the scene of my crime," Oscar struck in. "By and by, the dames came out, all chatter and noise. She didn't come at first.

But in the end, she and a younger woman——"

"One of the granddaughters?" asked Tommy wistfully.

"No. Haven't I already told you that? A young woman, but one who lived in another direction. I tell you I hated her as she clung to the old lady, and I was scared stiff for fear she'd stick clear to the house. But no. I tell you, the way things happen in this affair shows that it was meant to be!" Oscar was dramatically earnest for a second. "Everything—Kerry Porter, Lawson's home paper, our finding you ready for something new in sprees, Tommy, Uncle Thad's barn, the Brannigan case—even the young woman's leaving the old one at that square, with eighty or ninety trolleys going along at their own sweet will across an interlacing system of tracks—you know, no traffic regulations, pandemonium, save-yourself-if-you-can! The intention of a benign Providence has been plain from the start. I stepped up to the old lady and I said, in my best style—a little familiar, you know, so that she might think I was some one she ought to know and had just forgotten for the moment:

"Better let me help you across here, Mrs. Metcalf."

"And she looked up at me, sort of bright and sparrowlike—she's got awfully pretty eyes for an old party—and she says:

"It is a dangerous place, that's a fact.' And then: 'I've a pretty good memory for faces, but I don't seem to recall yours.'

"No," said I, with that open, honest air of mine, 'you don't know me. But I was in court this morning and very much interested in the Brannigan case. I've got my car here, waiting in Defrees Street. I wish you'd let me run you home, Mrs. Metcalf, and ask you some questions about aspects of it that were not brought out in court.' And I'll tell

you fellows one thing—when that good old soul said she'd like to, that she always did like to ride in an 'auter,' I felt very much like backing out of the whole thing then and there."

"If you ask me, I think it a pity you didn't follow the only ray of common sense you've been granted in the whole business," was the cheerful comment of Mr. Greer, who assumed the critical airs of a mere onlooker instead of a participant.

Oscar favored him with a murderous look, or one as nearly murderous as the cherubic type of countenance can achieve. Then, scorning comment, he went on with his tale.

"We were well into the outskirts of Fergustown before she noticed that we weren't headed for home. She'd been telling me her opinion that Brannigan was merely an unfortunate, homeless lad, and I had been talking to her like a reform warden of Sing Sing on a lecture tour. But I tell you my pulse was going it at a thousand a second, and I was fairly woozy in the head. We were approaching a bridge where Tommy was to join the expedition again, and I knew I had to dash that nice old lady's face with that stuff. Oh, it was horrible! The sweat stood out on my forehead and my wrists felt like water.

"She gave me a sort of sharp glance when she called my attention to the fact that we were getting into the country, and I apologized. Said how I hadn't noticed in my interest in our talk and would have to ask my way; I'd run along slowly until I saw some one. Well, I saw Tommy waiting at the near side of the bridge. I slowed up, and she sort of leaned forward, and"—Oscar paused for a moment and took a great gulp of tepid coffee—"well, I did it. And as she flopped back, gasping and struggling, I fell out of the damned car and Tommy hopped in and took the wheel from my flapping paws. They had about as much direction in them as

a baby's and—I was beastly sick for a few minutes. And—here we are. Give me a drink."

At the recollection of that night ride, Oscar's round pink face went wet and white again. Tommy looked at him judicially and, deciding that his need was great, poured him a stiff drink of whisky from a flask. Oscar tossed it off and gradually resumed his ordinary aspect.

"Well," said Leonard gloomily, after he had witnessed the transforming effect of the stimulant, "we can tell her we were crazy—which is no lie—and return her uninjured to Fergustown. I can tell her." He brightened as he spoke. "She hasn't seen me. I can say that this is a private sanitarium and that you"—he nodded to Oscar—"are the most difficult patient—cunning and all that—and that you escaped a few days ago, and that we were scouring the country for you when you turned up here with her. Your mania," he continued reflectively, "is that every one is insane and should be incarcerated. I'll tell her that and I'll return her safe to Fergustown—"

"The merry brimstone march you will!" interrupted Oscar belligerently, and Tommy also dissented.

"Nothing doing!" declared the young man from Omaha decidedly. "We're going to see this thing through now. Why, all the work is done, all the danger past! From now on it's velvet, clear velvet. You fellows remember that, before we left Omaha, I arranged a code with Petie Nolan? Well, then! He'll have a night letter this morning that will read perfectly smoothly, like a message about a hunting trip into Montana. Petie acts as guide for a lot of Easterners, on and off, so there'll be nothing peculiar in that. But what the night letter really says is for him to send a message to Rose Metcalf in Fergustown, Massachusetts, reading:

"Grandmother well and safe. Best of care taken of her by kind friends. Do not worry and do not permit any agitation, as the reaction might be malign. Let only benignant influences prevail. Will send weekly bulletins.

"That, you see, sounds like some kind of a New Thought, Christian Science bug. Petie, having telegraphed that by telephone from a public booth in a neighborhood where he is unknown, will light out on a little expedition to Wyoming. And the Sherlock Holmeses will have a busy time, yes?" Tommy seemed to pat himself upon the back as he waited their compliments upon his careful forethought. "Some plot, what?" he demanded again. "Pretty sharp—to center the detectives' interest on Omaha?"

"This Petie of yours—how do you know he won't leak?" growled Leonard, determined to take a dark view of the situation.

"Petie's mine, all right, all right," declared Tommy. "I don't want to hand myself any bouquets, but I was able to help Petie when he needed help and needed it quick and bad. He's been mine ever since, and he's got all the faithfulness of two faithful races in his blood—Indian and Irish. His father was a squawman—an Irish trooper who married a Cherokee woman when his enlistment was up—and instead of being a half-breed, Petie's the whitest man I know—in loyalty, I mean."

"Why did you have the telegram sent to Rose Metcalf?" asked Vail dreamily. "The other one—Virginia—the pale, lilylike blond—looked to me as if she'd be more apt to do any worrying that was to be done."

"Any one with half an eye could see that Rose Metcalf is the head of that concern," replied Tommy vigorously.

"Say, you fellows, if you can stop quarreling over which granddaughter is the whole show," said Leonard Greer, "listen to me for a few minutes.

You say this old lady is sorry, now, that she got Brannigan into trouble—doesn't believe that he's guilty of all those burglaries they want to fasten on him. Well, why don't we claim to be pals of his, and tell her we're going to keep her here only long enough to help him out of the clutches of the Fergustown officials? Tell her that, with her out of the way, there's no evidence against him, and that we have got to keep her out of the way until after his trial. She'd fall for the story—maybe. And if she did, she wouldn't be worried for fear we meant to cut her throat every minute, and she might—go along peaceable, as the policemen say to their recalcitrant captives. What say?"

"Of course, it would be a big help if she'd stand for it," agreed Tommy, but doubtfully.

"Yes," said Oscar. "For I'll tell you one thing—I couldn't keep her stupefied, not even if it were safe! I couldn't do it. She—sort of gets you. I couldn't keep her stupefied. And—if she weren't stupefied, she might be sort of difficult to manage for any length of time. Yes. If we can make her agree to her own kidnaping, that will certainly be the best way. And, you see, she really does consider this Brannigan affair awfully important. They've talked about nothing else in her circle in Fergustown since it happened. She thinks it's some pumpkins of a business! Yes, we might work it!"

"Well, it's bed now for the sleepers, and watch for the watcher. I think we'd better take the first watch, Fraser. Vail's nearly all in. We'll wake him at seven, and some time in the forenoon, he, Oscar the eloquent, will induce her to agree to stay kidnaped like a lady! Tell her we'll show her a good time, Vail, if she'll be good and quiet," said Leonard.

"All right, I will," agreed the young doctor. "And say, fellows——" He broke off.

They looked curiously at him as he stood embarrassed beside the door. Embarrassment was usually not a characteristic of Doctor Oscar Vail's.

"Say what?" demanded Greer.

"This is my last escapade, my very last escapade!" declared Oscar fervently. "Never again do I play the giddy goat! What? Do I hear no echoes?"

"Same here, old man," agreed Leonard.

"Well, it'd have to be a mighty attractive escapade to drag me from the path of virtue," was all that Tommy would say.

"Hang it, man, it's enough of an adventure to earn one's living!" protested Leonard.

But Tommy, before whom that simple path of excitement did not open, merely stared dubiously at his friend. And Oscar, yawning prodigiously, went off to bed.

CHAPTER VII.

"Say, leggo my shoulder, can't you?" Oscar Vail, shaken out of the heavy torpor of utter exhaustion, growled his protest indistinctly. Having growled and squirmed, he attempted to burrow again into the pillow and to recapture the deep, slow slumber out of which he had been partially jarred.

"For the love of Mike, Vail, wake up! *Wake up!* You've got to! Don't you hear what I've been telling you, you clown you?"

Extreme exasperation and something still more urgent spoke in Leonard Greer's voice.

"Lemme lone," murmured Oscar, fathoms sunk again. But at the sheer violence of his friend's onslaught, he perforce roused himself, struggled to one elbow, and glared upon his tormentor. "Say, there's nothing to this!" he declared. "I don't choose to be manhandled in this fashion! Assault and battery in one's own bed——"



The three conscience-stricken young men gazed at her in astonishment and alarm. Then they looked questioningly at one another.

"She's sick, I tell you! She's sick. She's in a fever——"

The protesting Oscar had heard at last, and understood. He had leaped from Uncle Thaddeus Fraser's vast mausoleum of a mahogany four-poster, canopied in dull, dusty brown, at the sound of the word "sick." He was drawing on his trousers, finding his slippers, inserting his arms into his coat sleeves, all in an instant. The flush of sleep and the habitual pinkness of good health and irresponsible good spirits faded from his plump cheeks.

"How do you know she's got a fever?" he demanded as he was ready to accompany his friend from the room. He glanced at the dollar watch upon his bureau—the hour was six.

"Her face is as red as fire, and she's babbling away like a—brook or something. And her forehead is as hot as blazes." Leonard spoke humbly. "It seems like a fever to an ignoramus like me, but maybe it isn't," he concluded hopefully. "Maybe you'll find that it's nothing worse than nightmare and excitement."

Oscar had grabbed his instrument case of alligator leather as he rushed from the room. He offered no hope to Leonard. His slippers flapped swiftly, noisily, and somehow discouragingly, down the wide stairs that curved in stately fashion through the great central well of the big old house. Leonard followed in his wake. Beside the bed, but out of sight of its occupant, sat Tommy Fraser, wearing a look of positively comic alarm, had there been any one present to appreciate humor. But there was not.

"Please let me put this in your mouth, Mrs. Metcalf," said Oscar authoritatively.

He had rinsed his clinical thermometer in water and alcohol, and he managed to insert it between Grandmother Metcalf's lips. He held it there for two minutes; then, withdrawing it, he read it by the light of a lamp.

"A hundred and two," he announced. "It might be worse. She evidently gets delirious early in the fever game."

For she was talking amiably and calmly about parsley, and was counseling some one named Temperance to remove some plants to a kitchen window box. Occasionally her remarks were punctuated by dry, hard little coughs, and less often by groans, as if she were momentarily aware of aching portions of her anatomy. Oscar applied his stethoscope and listened.

"Grippe," he announced. "The courtroom was full of it, and there's evidently a law in Fergustown condemning to instantaneous death without trial any one who opens a window in a public building. That's why no one dared to let a breath of fresh air into that pesthouse. They were sneezing and coughing and spitting and hawking. It was disgustingly filthy, but, of course, too ordinary to excite comment. She caught it there." He insisted upon that.

"You don't think the drug—and the

ride——" Leonard besought him to absolve them all from the possibility of murder.

"The drug and the ride didn't help her a little bit!" declared Oscar pitilessly. "Not a bit! She didn't breathe normally, and she got chilled, I suppose, though Tommy and I tried to keep her covered well. But the bug was in her, and the—incidents of the trip"—he snarled out his euphemism—"did the rest. Don't try to apply any healing salve to your conscience, Greer!"

"She won't—— She isn't going to—— You know what to do for her, don't you, Oscar?" Almost tearfully Tommy besought him to say that there was no danger.

"I don't know whether she will or not," insisted Oscar, who had been writing things on a pad. "She's an elderly woman, so of course the danger is great. Yes, I know more or less how to take care of her. Here, Fraser, go down to the apothecary's in the town and get these things. And try to get hold of a good woman who knows how to clean up a house. A deaf and dumb one would be the best kind," he added casually.

And thus it happened that at the moment when Rose and Virginia, white and distraught, were reading a mysterious, unsigned telegram from Omaha assuring them of their grandmother's safety, and when Temperance, over the telephone, was listening to the local detective department declaring a reliable clew showed Mrs. Metcalf to be in Boston taking specialist advice on a mysterious malady, the amiable old lady really lay in a cleaned, scrubbed, sunny room on the second floor of old Thaddeus Fraser's country house, with the bed rolled clear to the long French windows that opened upon a balcony, with the windows open, and with Oscar Vail, looking like a cherub frozen into sudden old age, sitting in an armchair

beside her and listening to her faint, occasional moans.

On a table covered with paper towel-
ing an orderly array of bottles and
glasses stood. Grandmother Metcalf
wore a fine white nightgown and over
it a soft white-knitted sack; a plain
white net cap confined and kept tidy
her gray hair. Oscar's list had been a
comprehensive one, and the rosy
woman, Mrs. Baugher, whom Tommy
had brought back with him from the
village, had been a competent nurse.
Tommy had explained that his new
housekeeper, who also happened to be
an elderly second cousin of his moth-
er's, had fallen ill, but that, provid-
entially, one of the friends who was
visiting him was a physician.

Oscar's eyes were more detached
from his objective surroundings than
was usual with those merry orbs. He
seemed to be facing a gloomy future,
a terrible unknown. Occasionally he
brought his glance back from the in-
tangible to the room—to the thin, deli-
cately chiseled old face upon the white
pillow, to the thin, wrinkled white hands
showing beneath the blue edging of the
white wool jacket. And thence his at-
tention always wandered, deprecatingly,
to a little miniature on the bureau—the
two pretty girls in the twin frame. It
had been taken out of Mrs. Metcalf's
hand bag when that had been locked
away from the possibly prying eyes of
Mrs. Baugher.

Sometimes a creaking, tiptoed step
paused at the door, an anxious, drawn
face was thrust in, and a voice whis-
pered hoarsely: "How is she now?
No better? But no worse? Well, that's
something, isn't it, Oscar? That's
something?" And the creaking step
would die away along the hall.

"Never," said Mrs. Baugher, when
she went down to her own home in the
village that evening to obtain more sup-
plies, "did I see nicer young men. Not
much more than boys, they ain't, and

just wrapped up in their old cousin
they are—leastways in Mr. Fraser's
old cousin. I tell you one thing—you
can always tell what kind of a young
man a young man is by the way he
treats the old!"

Mrs. Baugher had an opportunity to
observe this agreeable phenomenon for
three weeks, for Grandmother Met-
calf's grippe developed within four or
five days into pneumonia, and then
there were eight days of acute danger,
followed by a week of only slightly
lessened tension.

"If ever I get the pneumonier," said
Mrs. Baugher, in relating the inci-
dents and her impressions of the period
to interested village audiences, "I ask
no better than to be 'tended by Doctor
Vail. No cat ever watched a mouse
more careful than what he watched that
disease. Day an' night, night an'
day—— It was sweet! An' the other
two—you'd er thought she was their
wives or their sweethearts, to see them
an' hear them. I count it a privilege to
have seen the like."

When Mrs. Metcalf came out of the
delirium that she maintained pretty
consistently during her fever, she ac-
cepted, for a dreamy day or two, the
assertion that she was in a hospital.
The events of the evening immediately
preceding her illness she seemed to for-
get. But not even the languor of con-
valescence could long dull her mind to
the fact that her granddaughters were
in no wise visible.

"Doctor Vail," she asked him one
day, as she sat up among her pillows, a
small island of old lady entirely sur-
rounded by a sea of light literature, col-
ored wool, amber knitting needles, and
flowers, "I'm getting real worried. I
want you should tell me the truth. Is
—are—was—was it really pneumonia I
had, and not something dreadful catch-
ing and fatal? And—tell me my two
girls ain't took it—ain't sick—or—
or——"

The moment had come, and Doctor Vail, who was by no means a complete fool, however much harum-scarum boyishness remained in him, recognized that it was upon him.

"Your granddaughters are both perfectly well, Mrs. Metcalf," he stated with assurance.

"You know you can't make me believe it," said the old lady. Her voice was gentle, but her bright brown eyes were full of anxiety. "If they was able to come to see me, you couldn't keep them away."

"You see," said Oscar Vail, swallowing hard, "they don't realize that you are ill."

"What?"

"Mrs. Metcalf, don't you remember, that evening in Fergustown after you had testified about Brannigan, how a young man—I—came up to you in the street and asked you to ride in his motor car home, and talk about the case——"

"Wait, wait!" cried Grandmother Metcalf breathlessly. "Was all that true, then? I've been harking back to it in my mind, but—I came to the conclusion it was something I had kind of dreamed in the fever, like a lot of other things."

"No, you didn't dream that," said Oscar, and Grandmother Metcalf settled her spectacles more firmly on her nose and looked at him. He reddened deeply. "You didn't dream that. That was the truth. You see, Mrs. Metcalf, I kidnaped you."

"And for the land's sake, *why?*" demanded Grandmother Metcalf explosively. She showed no marks of terror or even of indignation, only sheer astonishment.

"I'll explain to you, if you'll let me."

More and more red grew the countenance of Doctor Oscar Vail; more and more thick and reluctant became his speech.

"That's what I'm waiting for—an

explanation," answered Grandmother Metcalf patiently.

"I'm—we're—friends of Brannigan—Bill Brannigan——"

"His name's Ed," observed grandma mildly.

"I mean Ed—I meant Big Brannigan," pursued Oscar, finding his tongue more and more inclined to twist. It was no longer in the least easy to lie to her. He glanced despairingly from her to the miniature on the bureau. The glance afforded him no further inspiration in glib falsehood. "Oh, hang it!" he cried. "I'm no good at explanation. I'll call Fraser—no, I'll call Greer. He'll tell you."

For Oscar remembered that Tommy's occupation for the past three weeks, during the rare moments when he had not been haunting the sick-room door or breaking speed laws on errands to the village or the nearest city in search of the latest hospital appliances, had been modeling a bust of Rose from courtroom memories and a study of the miniature. Oscar felt convinced that such work was no sort of first aid to the necessity of lying to Grandmother Metcalf. So he called Leonard, who had been able, thanks to Winifred Sanborn, to survey the twin portraits with perfect equanimity. And, Leonard arriving, breathless and with the expression of one ever expectant of evil tidings, he remarked:

"Say, Greer, will you explain to Mrs. Metcalf about our being friends of Bill—Big—Brannigan's and all? She—she knows now—— She remembers that evening in Fergustown——" His mumblings grew indistinct.

"Why, certainly, I'll tell her."

And Leonard, with considerable eloquence and pathos, reviewed an old friendship with the Brannigan boy and declared that Ed's friends, knowing his innocence of the charges on which he was held, had determined that the only witness against him should not appear.

Grandmother rubbed her nose perplexedly.

"What I can't understand," she said, "is why, if he's got friends like you boys—and I'm bound to say you don't seem just his sort—why you didn't do something for him before he got into this mess. But it's just like men—and all the rest of the world, I cal'late. Well, as long as I am out of the State, and no one knows where, I'll be glad to be spared testifying against him any more—provided you can set my girls' minds at rest about me. His case is coming up in a week or two more, anyway."

Thus, with amazing calm, did the remarkable woman accept the fairy story of Mr. Greer's invention.

"Gee, Len, I didn't know you had it in you to be such a cold-blooded liar!" remarked Oscar Vail, half admiringly, half disparagingly. "I couldn't yarn like that to that nice old lady—"

"Please remember," retorted Leonard spiritedly, "that if you hadn't had it in you to perpetrate a cold-blooded kidnapping and to endanger a nice old lady's life by powerful anaesthetics, I shouldn't need to tell her yarns now. Where's that moonstruck ass, Fraser?"

"Gone to Pittsfield to order a box of American-beauty roses to be delivered in Fergustown to-morrow," snarled Oscar, "to Rose Metcalf. And to get himself another bag or two of plaster so he can begin another study of her. Gee, don't it make you sick—the money that fellow's got to blow in?"

And Doctor Vail sent a look more illuminative than many boxes of roses toward the picture of Virginia Black on the bureau.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was the first of December. In the dining room of Tommy Fraser's house, before a blazing log fire that added ornament to the work of heating, less

ostentatiously and perhaps more competently done by a renovated furnace, sat Grandmother Metcalf, knitting and basking in the admiring regard of three young men. She had just returned from her first trip to New York, taken in their custody, and she was full of the pleasantest recollections. She had teaed and dined in gay restaurants, as palpitantly anxious to avoid recognition as her companions were that she should avoid it; she had gone to the theater three times and had laughed and wept copiously over the humor and the pathos of the hero's predicaments and the heroine's lot respectively; she had ridden in the subway, and had bought a new black silk dress. Never had existence been more thrilling and amusing to her. She had been allowed to write a second letter by her own hand to the girls. The first had reached them—as the *Fergustown Morning Sun*, to which Tommy was a subscriber, had informed her—from a station in Montana. The detective force had consequently concentrated upon the Western clews, the *Sun* had added.

Mrs. Baugher, now a regular attendant upon the household, came in from the hall with the mail bag in her hands. Her little boy had been installed as errand boy to the establishment, and he had ridden in on his bicycle to get the papers and magazines that were the chief part of the mail. Leonard Greer tore the wrappings from the papers.

"Give me that magazine, if nobody else wants it," said Grandmother Metcalf, indicating a certain periodical. "It's got a story I'm reading—a continued story. I ain't keen on continued stories usually, but this one is fine." And she turned the pages eagerly.

Leonard plunged into the pages of the *Fergustown Sun* and Oscar into those of the *Copper Weekly News Letter*. Tommy Fraser, after yawning at the headlines of the New York papers,

went toward the corner in which he had established himself as a sculptor and, removing a cloth from his latest study of Rose Metcalf, fell to work upon it.

Suddenly Leonard gave a faint exclamation. Tommy and grandma were too much absorbed in their respective occupations to heed it, but Oscar looked up. At a sign from Leonard, they retreated to the hall. Leonard handed his companion the paper and pointed to a certain article.

"'Pink Eye' Prentice's Confession Releases Big Brannigan," read Oscar. And, continuing, he learned that robberies in the Squirrel Hill district had not ceased with the locking up of Big Brannigan; and that at the most recent one disaster had overtaken the burglars, who, caught by the special watchman and the police whom he had summoned, had all become competitors in turning State's evidence, with the result that Big Brannigan was exonerated.

"She'll insist on going home when she learns that," Leonard pointed out.

"I'm glad of it, Greer," said Oscar Vail. He spoke earnestly. "I—I'm cured. I wouldn't keep her here now for the sake of old Kerry Porter's wealth. I wouldn't hold her up or intimidate her—even if I could! But I couldn't!" He chuckled. "Grandma doesn't intimidate for a cent. But I'm done with the whole silly performance—if you fellows agree. What do you say? I like her. I—I'd like to begin square with her."

"I'd like to myself—though not for the same reason," declared Leonard with a grin.

"Oh, there's nothing in that!" said Oscar, elaborately indifferent. "Of course, you didn't see the two girls, as Tommy and I did. You didn't have any personalities to attach to the receipt of these fake messages we've been

sending. That's all. There's nothing in it."

Leonard laughed.* He whistled for Tommy, and that worthy young artist, lightly covered with dust, came into conference. He was bidden to read the paper.

"So the jig's up," he said thoughtfully. "Well—it's for you fellows to say if we shall let her see the news, or if we shall conceal it until the next item of interest to us comes traveling from Copper, in the obituary column. My stakes aren't quite the same as yours, you see, fellows," he added.

"We're through," said Leonard and Oscar in unison, and Oscar added, "Through for good! No more giddy goating for me!"

"Same here," declared the other two. Greer, on the flattering assumption that he had forensic eloquence, was elected spokesman, and the three young men filed back into the bright, cheery dining room, Oscar fastening the door securely behind him. Grandmother was still smiling interestedly over her magazine.

"Live and learn," she remarked. "It says here to soap your napkins before you hem them—makes the work easier. I never knew that before, and I reckon I've broke at least a bushel of needles trying to push them through pesky damask. What's got into you boys? You look as solemn as if you had lost your last friend. What's the matter?"

"We're only afraid we're going to lose her, Mrs. Metcalf," said Leonard Greer, with feeling.

And then he began his recital. Miss Minerva Whittelsey knocked again upon the office doors in Copper, duns dogged their footsteps, old college pranks wore the gay colors of adventure, Kerry Porter came in, the Fergustown paper exchanged hands—and here at last they sat in friendship together, conspirators and conspiratee. What was she going to do with them?

Leonard Greer was quite pale when he finished his speech. He had the look in his eyes of a man awaiting a sentence of deserved rigor. The others gazed with equal apprehension at Grandmother Metcalf's face. At first her bright brown eyes behind her silver-rimmed spectacles were bewildered, and the winter roses in her withered cheeks paled a little. Her knitting, too, had fallen into her lap. Then a brightness greater even than normal began to glow in her eyes, and the returning pinkness of her cheeks was fairly girlish. She leaned back in her rocker and began to laugh. The three conscience-stricken young men gazed at her in astonishment and alarm. Then they looked questioningly at one another. Had something gone wrong with Grandmother Metcalf's mind? Had the shock of discovering them to be such deliberate villains unhinged her reason?

She laughed and laughed. She removed her glasses and wiped the little rivulets of tears that overflowed her cheeks without the slightest damage to the pink color.

"Granny——" began Oscar.

"Mrs. Metcalf——" began Leonard Greer.

"Dear Mrs. Metcalf——" Tommy Fraser entreated her.

"Get some water, Greer," commanded Oscar, in his capacity of physician in waiting.

Leonard dashed from the room and returned with that first aid to the hysteric, but Grandmother Metcalf was gradually subsiding from pealing mirth to bubbling, and then to merely smiling.

"Then you don't think we are a hopelessly bad lot, Mrs. Metcalf? You wouldn't have laughed if you had thought we were—really criminals, would you?" Tommy spoke ingratiatingly and looked toward the bust of Rose in the corner.

Grandmother Metcalf sat suddenly erect again and wiped her glasses before placing them again upon her straight little nose. She ceased to laugh, and she looked steadily at each young man in turn. And the eyes of each fell before that look, and the color of each mounted, and over each sheepish, shamed face, there stole a look of still deeper humiliation.

"I wasn't laughing at the joke you played on me, young gentlemen," said granny dryly, and they shuffled still more uncomfortably. "I'll laugh at that by and by—maybe. The joke I was laughing at this time is the joke on you." And another outburst of mirth threatened her.

"On us?"

"On you. You see—I ain't the right Dorcas Metcalf, that's all." She began to laugh again. She leaned back again to enjoy herself still further.

"Not the right Dore——" they began explosively.

"Not the right Dorcas Metcalf," she insisted firmly. "Oh, you've been awful clever, you boys! But you made just one big mistake—you didn't make sure of your victim! You had ought to have gone straight down to Middlebury, Maine, and made sure. And I will say that you would have had a lesson, if you'd tried any of your tricks with the right Dorcas Metcalf. She's my cousin, and she and Kerry Porter were keeping company forty years ago and no man has ever dared to keep company with her since, let alone play smart-Alec tricks on her!"

"How many Dorcas Metcalfs does the Metcalf family contain, Mrs. Metcalf?" asked Tommy calculatingly.

"There's about six now," replied grandma placidly. "Two's all that's left out of the bunch in my generation—Kerry Porter's old sweetheart and me. But it's a family name, and the Metcalfs always christen their oldest

daughters that—and there's a sight of Metcalfs. A real big-family sort of people they are—or were till my two girls come along." Granny nodded her head toward the bust to indicate that she referred to her granddaughters.

They stood silent again before her for a while. Then Oscar Vail began to see the situation in a gleeful light, and his laughter shook the air. His comrades glared at him for a minute or two and then they, too, fell before the perception of the joke they had elaborately played upon themselves.

"Well, granny," said Oscar, when the uproar had subsided, "what are you going to do with us now? You've adopted us, you know. You aren't going to cast us off again just because we're bunglers at the kidnaping game, are you?" Beneath his jesting tone, there was some real anxiety.

Grandmother studied them all once more, fixedly, sharply. Finally the hint of severity that sat so unfamiliarly on her features faded.

"Do you know what I think?" she demanded. "You hadn't gotten past the colt age when you planned this kick-up. I think you're past it now. Nursing an old woman you've kidnaped through the pneumonia'll 'cure coltishness in 'most any one! It wouldn't cure badness, but it would plain coltishness. Now, maybe I'm right and maybe I'm wrong. But I don't think I'm wrong. I ain't often wrong about men-folks," she added complacently. "And—we're all going back to Fergustown. This rich young man, here, if he can afford to lend you money for all sorts of foolishness, can just as well afford to lend you some for something worth while. He can set you up in business in Fergustown. There's plenty there, both lawing and doctoring. You can board with me for a while. I've got a

big enough place, and Temperance Prouty is a real good cook——"

"But, Mrs. Metcalf," cried Tommy Fraser, abject, craven fear in his voice, "what are you going to say about us to"—he looked at his bust—"to your granddaughters?"

"Yes, granny, what?" entreated Oscar.

Leonard smiled, saturnine over the revealing intensity of the inquiries. Winifred Sanborn, he said to himself, not foreseeing the future, had cured him of the girl habit.

"Well, I ain't made up my mind yet," said granny deliberately. Then she relented. "I guess I'll fix up something that won't tell lies nor yet be too truthful. And"—the sparkle of prophecy brightened the brown eyes behind the glasses—"if a day comes when you're particular about having them know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about you"—Oscar and Tommy blushed and breathed hard—"you can decide on your own way of telling it."

"Granny, bless you!" cried Doctor Vail.

"And now," said Grandmother Metcalf briskly, "I want to get right back to Fergustown. I want to get ready for Christmas. And since that Brannigan unfortunate is out, I'm going to buy another lot and keep a gardener. Maybe I'll need another lot, some day. It's all nonsense to suppose that everything has happened to you that *can* happen, just because you've turned sixty-five! Why, look at me!"

They all looked at her with the utmost affection, and she began to roll up her knitting.

"Yes, I think I may need another lot, some day. With a house on it," said Grandmother Metcalf, smiling at Oscar Vail.

Those Who Work and Those Who Wear

By Grace M. Sissons

THE ability to buy unlimited supplies of railroad tickets and to gaze upon the "Seven Wonders of the World" would seem, together with the other "advantages of wealth," to insure an interesting personality. But—witness the talk on a fashionable hotel piazza. Here you will discover the sum total of a trip de luxe around the globe to be that "Japan is quaint," "Bombay dirty," "the Paris gowns lovely," and "the European servant much better than ours." Their travel, like their clothes, is made to order for them—made to wear for show.

THE psychological reason why the purchasing power—especially the inherited one—is more of a hindrance than a help toward acquiring an interesting personality is that it enables the possessor to hire all his creating done for him, and it is the use of the creative faculty above all things else that makes an individual interesting. What is created doesn't matter so much. It may be a bird house or a new variety of potato or a grand opera or a "big business from the ground up" or a labor-saving device for the kitchen. Whatever it is, it is bound to make the creator interesting—quite regardless of his pocketbook.

BUT, in addition to the deadly ease with which wealth hires its creating done, it takes so much time for its possessors—especially the feminine ones—to wear its sartorial purchases and to be worn by its social ones. Unfortunately society does not operate under the eight-hour law. No wonder that the creative instinct, rebelling against the endless chain of ready-made teas and dinners and dances, breaks out now and then in bizarre and weird entertainment.

RECENTLY a writer went to a great summer hotel for some sketches of unique personalities. She made diligent, but fruitless, search among the bridge-playing, tea-drinking guests, but she discovered that there was no such dearth among the employees. The housekeeper had brought up her fatherless brood manufacturing ice for her fellow townsmen. The founding of Rome was a mild undertaking compared to the establishment of that ice business on a paying basis. At the supposedly settled age of fifty, she had sold out and started forth to see the world by the thrifty method of acting as housekeeper in hotels. She was studying French on the side with a view to securing a position abroad as soon as the war was over.

A ONE-ARMED chambermaid had copied nature's leaves and flowers so skillfully with her embroidery needle that she had a collection of blue ribbons from all the surrounding State fairs, and her feeling for beauty was as true as that of an artist with brushes.

IN the laundry was a deaf and dumb woman who, in her hours off work, had established a bird colony on a vacant lot. She erected bird houses, planted berry bushes and shrubs, and played the part of beneficent Providence to the feathered folk, who treated her with the begging familiarity invariably accorded kindly Providences—to the unfailing delight of numerous visitors.

THERE were at least three others among the help "good for a magazine sketch of interesting personalities."

IT is those who work, not those who wear, that develop personalities.

The Unwelcome Guest

By Marie Manning

Author of "Disinheriting Uncle," "The Perpetual Providence," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICK

The adventures that befell a girl who, in a spirit of daring and longing, went to a ball to which she had not been invited.

IT was a sedate block; nothing worth reporting ever seemed to happen there, and the policeman who patrolled it was imperceptibly thickening in the trunk—like an old tree in a forest.

A long time ago, the street had been, in the idiom of real estate, "very choice." But now the substantial old houses with the carved mahogany doors and flagged vestibules had been converted into flats of the more urbane type. Only the big double house in the middle of the block, in a grim, unsmiling way, seemed to retain its ancient dignity. There was no coming or going worth mentioning, but not for a moment could the house be mistaken for anything but the dwelling place of people of importance.

About the old house was a garden with a high red brick wall that sagged in places, and in the spring white pear blossoms dropped their curled flakes into the street below. Within the inclosure, some very old trees gave an air of seclusion to the grass-grown walks, and in early May the scent of lilacs and narcissus drifted out, sweet and heady.

On the east side of the old house, on the top floor, was a window, whose light, like an unwinking eye, burned far into the night. The rest of the house retired early. At nine-thirty every window had gone black—all but the watchful eye up under the roof.

The heavy policeman, plodding along on his peaceful rounds, never failed to look up at that light, for the keeper of the light and the keeper of the peace were old friends. A good many years ago, a little girl had run up to Policeman Clancy, slipped her hand into his, and said:

"Please, Mr. Policeman, will you take me right away to the orphan asylum?"

Looking down, he had seen the oddest little figure—far-apart blue eyes under a wide brow, a retroussé little nose, a pointed chin that quivered with the earnestness of her plea. She had been hatless, coatless, but the quaintly cut merino frock had conveyed, to the officially appraising eyes, that such vanities were hardly destined for a public institution.

"Well, walk with me a bit, an' tell me who's all your fri'nds."

"I haven't any friends at all." Her air of detachment had been complete. "I'm what's called an heirress."

"Begob, 'n' is that the way av ut?"

"I have a great-aunt and just a plain aunt and a governess—but no sisters, brothers, kittens, or puppies. Cats and dogs are full of germs, 'n' if they let me have one, I might catch something 'n' die. My aunt says I've just got to live till the estate is settled or it would make worse com-plic-ka-tions."

"Do you hear thot now? A li'yer couldn't put it any better. An' what put the asylum into your head?"

"A book I found in the potatoes. The grocer's boy forgot it. It was called 'An Orphan's Rise to Greatness,' and it was all about the awful times they had in the asylum. But I wouldn't mind that a teeny-weeny bit. It's being just one orphan all by myself that I can't stand."

When Policeman Clancy had learned that it was from the big house with the garden that the little girl had run away, he had not been surprised. The two elderly women, whom she had differentiated as aunts "great" and "plain," had lived in that house practically in a state of siege for years. They had grown old with their backs to the wall, fighting for their rights. As the defendants of the great Colebrooke estate, the law courts had become their cosmos.

"'Tis but a poor home for a child," Policeman Clancy had said to himself, but aloud he had reminded her: "The Colebrookes ain't quitters. They sit tight. Ask yer aunts if that ain't so."

"Oh, but I'm so tired of being an orphan 'n' an heiress! I want friends an' cats an' dogs, 'n' to go to parties 'n' have white slippers, an' I want to dance—dance—dance!"

"The longer ye wait in that ol' house, the more cats, dogs, 'n' dancin' you'll be afther havin' whin you're bigger."

With such crafty arguments had Policeman Clancy induced the wanderer to return. They had found the house in an uproar, the aunts proclaiming that Phyllis had been kidnaped and was being held for a ransom. Taking full advantage of his glory as a hero, Clancy had prescribed a kitten as a charm against future roaming. The aunts had agreed, despite the germs, and next day Clancy had brought "Peggy," destined to found a dynasty of famous mousers.

That had been the beginning of the Clancy-Colebrooke friendship. Phyllis used to tell the policeman that he was "most as good as an orphan frien' in a 'sy-lum."

Phyllis was now eighteen, and the Colebrooke case was, as usual, in the courts. The great-aunt still lived, mummified, yet not quite dead; they would take her out to drive, on pleasant days, in disproof of the other side's rumor of extinction. The

aunt that had been called "plain," to distinguish her from the one called "great," had grown to be a very plain aunt indeed. Phyllis did not exist for either, except as a legal asset. A forensic reference to "the child who has grown to womanhood waiting for justice" never failed of a point in their favor.



"Please, Mr. Policeman, will you take me right away to the orphan asylum?"

The awakening came one day when Phyllis, rummaging in the attic, came across a portrait of her great-aunt painted at the age of twenty. It was like looking at her own face in a mirror.

She continued to ransack the attic, an impelling instinct leading her to search for evidences of actual life on the part of the Colebrookes. What sort of people had they been before the desiccating influence of the law had mummified them? There were chests full of clothes, some of which had belonged to her mother, who, it seemed, had been a celebrated actress. Phyllis wanted to know about her, but the "plain" aunt could never keep her mind off the family lawsuit long enough to tell.

As a home, the old house grew to be so strange and ghostly that Phyllis began to find refuge in a mystic world in which she spent the most vivid hours of her life. She would dress up in the stage costumes that had been her mother's and live on magnificently ample terms with life as *Portia*, *Juliet*, even *Lady Macbeth*. This was living—actual, thrilling, real. The dream was when she walked through the shadowy old house in the rôle of Phyllis Colebrooke.

Achilles, who, despite the misnomer, was as tender a mother cat as ever brought up a family of kittens, could have qualified as a dramatic critic at any time. Perhaps no cat that ever lived had heard quite as often "The quality of mercy is not strained." Therefore, on that wonderful evening in spring when the lilacs from the old garden drenched the air with their heady, overpowering perfume, the white cat wondered why her mistress did not put on the splendid red robe and say the words that always made her happy, instead of opening one book after another, running to lean out of the window and listen to some music down the street, and generally conducting herself as lightly as a kitten:

At ten o'clock Phyllis tossed aside the book as a bad bargain. It was Hamerton's "Intellectual Life," and the particular homily she had been reading was addressed: "To a friend who maintained that surroundings were a matter of indifference to a thoroughly occupied mind."

"Achilles, it's a pity this gentleman never addressed a letter to, say, 'An aunt-bound young lady who spent her life waiting for a lawsuit to be decided.'"

Achilles blinked, but did not commit herself. Down the street, some unusual commotion seemed to have invaded the tranquillity of that perpetually staid neighborhood. Motor and carriage doors banged and there was music—such deliciously tantalizing dance music!

"Will you listen to the torture of that, Achilles?"

A famous orchestra was playing a waltz; the swing of it was irresistible. The drums and the brass crashed out the rhythm with the regular surge of the sea; then the strings and the wood picked it up and made it sob and wail in the minor, like the wind in pine trees.

"Achilles, I can hear the castanets!"

She raised her hands above her head, snapped her fingers in unison with the music, and began to dance. Her eyes were curiously ablaze; there was a gay lawlessness about her.

"I guess we can give a party all our own, Achilles. But first we must dress."

A quarter of an hour later, Phyllis was ready for her barmecidal ball. The dress she wore was an especial favorite of hers—a replica of Cosway's miniature of Mrs. Abingdon as the Muse of Comedy. Her mother had worn it to a ball in Venice, and Whistler had made a sketch of her. Her daughter tipped the mirror over her bureau to catch a full-length reflection of the long lines of heliotrope and rose. Her sandaled feet were delightfully visible.

There was a chaplet of laurel in her hair, and that she liked best of all. As she stood before the mirror, the orchestra began to play "The Blue Danube." With flexed arms, swaying in wavelike gestures, she undulated to the figure in the glass.

"Achilles, suppose I copy cat Mr. Hamerton and write a letter to: 'A girl dressed for a ball, but obliged to stay home for lack of an invitation.' I know just how she'd feel getting ready, but oughtn't we to push our investigations a step farther? Oughtn't we to know how she felt straight up to the house of inhospitality? Achilles, what difference will it make a hundred years from now? We're going to play we're invited to that ball and walk as far as that striped awning and 'The Blue Danube,' and then probably die, on the spot, of a broken heart."

The faint smell of camphor in the old camel's-hair shawl that she had wrapped about her shoulders was immensely steadying; so was the big front-door key—cold and uncomfortable—that she slipped down the neck of her gown for safe-keeping. But she walked as one who swims against a current, and a curious sense of exhilaration made her head reel.

Carriages and motors, like jewel caskets, were disgorging jewels of women in rainbow-tinted wraps at the end of the red-and-white awning. Phyllis was finding it difficult to take her own dare—that of walking under the openings in the awning designed for the accommodation of pedestrians. She stood for a second on the crimson wishing carpet, preparing to duck under the canopy and escape on the other side, when the bang of a bursting tire sent her scurrying up the canvas runway. She turned to retrace her steps and found herself confronted by a solid wall of Elizabethan farthingales, which moved with difficulty under the inclosure.

To pass them by in that confined

space was impossible. Too agitated to think clearly, she found herself ascending the red-carpeted steps that led to the house.

"I don't want to go in. I was only trying to get out of the way," she stammered up at the liveried footman at the door.

But his attitude—one of resentment at the imputation that he was human—made him seem to grow yards and yards high and blossom into more and more gold lace. It was horribly like something in "Alice in Wonderland," and Phyllis, more dead than alive with terror at her predicament, fled the gold-laced colossus and found herself, still in the lead of the Elizabethans, in the dressing room. Here a smart maid, with the dexterity of a pickpocket, divested her of her wrap. She watched this last bridge swept away in an agony of concern; some nightmare clutch seemed to grip her.

"I must be quite mad!" she muttered.

"Beg pardon, miss?" inquired the smart maid.

"Nothing," she groaned, and started to find the hostess and explain.

The hostess stood at the head of the stairs—a granite-faced lady dressed in cerise velvet. She had evolved a system of receiving guests of which she was not a little proud. Already that evening she had disposed of two hundred and sixty-nine people by her old, reliable method of automatically shooting an arm aloft, murmuring a staccato word of welcome, and then, still grasping the social obstacle, giving it a gentle impulse away from her toward the door. The whole transaction had the precision of a semaphore dispatching trains.

Phyllis stood before this lady, and in a voice that to her own ears sounded like a megaphone said:

"My being here is a mistake. I wasn't invited. I got swept in."

But the lady and her system were



The bang of a bursting tire sent her scurrying up the canvas runway.

as relentless as a force of nature. She did not trouble to listen; she merely speeded up the system. And Phyllis experienced some difficulty in preserving her footing, with such an impetus was she sped toward the ballroom.

Her wish had come true—here she was at the ball, and furiously angry with herself for being there. That it should be a costume ball was too much like having Fate set a trap for her.

She dropped into a gold chair beside a girl of about her own age, rather perversely attractive, with quick, darting gestures, bright eyes, and sharp little white teeth. This young person wore a yellow tulle gown trimmed with brown fur, and Phyllis couldn't help wondering if she had merely accented her own type and come as a chipmunk.

While Phyllis was considering this, the other girl said:

"Are you frightened?" The letter "r" seemed to present difficulties. "I'm frightened to death. If I'm a stick to-night, no junior pwom for me. Isn't it dwdful the way the young matwons scoop all our partners? My chaperon just dwopped me here. She's having the time of her life."

"I don't want any partners," Phyllis confided. "I want to go home."

"But why? You look darling in that gown. There's a man here I know. He'd ask me to dance, if he would only see me."

"Send him a thought wave."

"Sometimes they won't work—no, it didn't then. See that awf'ly distinguished-looking man in black. He's old, of course—thirty-four—but he dances divinely."

"He seems wonderfully preserved," Phyllis said dryly.

"Oh, what's the use of thought waves or anything else? She's got him!" Phyllis' neighbor wailed.

"Who's got whom?"

"My chaperon is fox-trotting with Robert Strickland, the man in black I was depending on to ask me to dance! But it's hopeless now! She snaps 'em up like a mouse trap."

"Your Black Prince, or Hamlet, or whatever he is, doesn't look happy at being snapped."

"That look"—the chipmunk girl rolled her eyes—"is just another of his fifty-seven varieties of fascination. He's been in our diplomatic corps, but he was too poor to stay there. Of course, lots and lots of women would give anything to marry him. Father says he's fighting with his back to the wall."

"Fighting the women who want to marry him?"

"Just about. He's a desirable small country on which the wealthy powers have fixed their eyes. That's father's, too. He's looking this way. Now concentrate your thoughts on him like mad.

If we do it right, he'll feel it and look. It says so in my 'Youth's Guide to Psychology.'"

And true to the wisdom of the textbook, Mr. Robert Strickland relinquished his partner—the long-distance chaperon—and came toward the chipmunk girl and Phyllis. In that whirl of prismatic colors, the black doublet and hose of the medieval knight carried a note of somber distinction. His face, stern and symmetrical, with the line of chin jutting a bit unduly, made the dark eyes, where romance, like an "error in judgment," dwelt, seem like a pair of lost children.

The textbook sorceress sat up like a prettily importuning chipmunk and frankly confessed to Strickland that she was perishing to dance. She indicated Phyllis as a fellow martyr.

"At least she's not confessed her tragedy, but it must be fearful, because she wants to go home."

The Black Prince smiled paternally; doubtless, at thirty-four, the plight of two fledglings nailed partnerless to the wall, while the chaperon of one, handsome and piratical, sailed the high seas as a sort of "Jolly Roger," was distinctly amusing.

He offered himself as "Strickland & Co., Limited; Partners Supplied," and he produced a good-looking young cousin up for his spring vacation.

The chipmunk girl did not realize it till it was all over, but owing to the flurry of introductions—or to the machinations of the Black Prince—she found herself paired off with the college-boy cousin while Phyllis regarded the man of thirty-four as the Ancient Mariner might have regarded the wedding guest. With simple feminine psychology, the chipmunk girl became furiously angry at "that strange girl."

Should she tell him, Phyllis asked herself. In spite of his age, he did not seem at all old. Would he behave like the footman and the hostess

—keep right on with his own idea of a party and not listen? Besides, this party to which she had not been invited was beginning to be interesting.

"Well," he inquired whimsically, knowing that he had been weighed, balanced, and generally arrived at, as a conclusion, "do you think I'll do?"

She laughed like a child caught stealing sugar.

"How did you know? No, you won't do. You seem too young."

"Once that would have been the cruellest of insults; now it's rather flattering."

And then he became aware that her costume was a replica of Cosway's miniature of Mrs. Abingdon as the Muse of Comedy. An old English print of this masterpiece, dated 1783, was the most cherished possession of his rather meager bachelor flat. The discovery of his favorite picture, masquerading in the flesh, gave him a curious feeling, almost of possession. Her beauty was as unconventional as it was patrician—long, narrow eyes, slightly retroussé nose, a mouth half lovable, half sad. It was this indefinable hint of pathos that made her more the Muse of Comedy than the original.

What had that little chatterbox said her name was? Brooke—Brooke—Yes, that was it. And Strickland found himself wondering to which family of Brookes his delightful windfall belonged. For it was characteristic of this young man to place people—especially women—by family; not that he was a snob—he was too many other things as well—but he was prouder of belonging to the Strickland family, originally of Hertfordshire, than he was of having taken the Cecil Rhodes prize that had given him a three-year scholarship at Oxford.

As a minor American diplomat, Strickland had done rather well. He was an excellent linguist; his poise was the result of a cosmopolitanism at once

elegant and selective. His book, "Constructive Peace Assurance," had attracted wide attention. But a very genuine poverty had forced him to abandon diplomacy in favor of the law.

The accumulation of these pallid misfortunes had given him rather a taking melancholy, a sort of pleasing rue that flamed to rage when any one took him for an actor—which was rather often in the case of new acquaintances. In spite of these things—or because of them—Strickland had a lovable streak. He was never conspicuously rude, in the modern, smart way. He was so sure of his position that he could afford to have charming manners.

As he talked to Phyllis, the orchestra again played "The Blue Danube." "Oh," she gasped, "they're playing it again! That's the thing that got me into all this trouble!"

"The Muse of Comedy mustn't admit that there is such a thing." They had danced around the ballroom before he said: "I see now that you're really the Muse of Dancing."

Her face sharpened with a sudden terror.

"Thank you for suggesting that. I'll be the Muse of Dancing while 'The Blue Danube' lasts."

"And after that, the deluge?" he inquired dryly.

"More likely the dénouement. So don't be surprised to see my clothes turn to rags as the clock strikes twelve."

She laughed rather wildly. Strickland could not tell whether her eyes were bright with tears or with laughter.

"Your 'Blue Danube' is a species of 'Last Ride,' a 'Who-knows-but-the-world-may-end-to-night' sort of thing? You know Browning's 'Last Ride,' don't you?" he inquired, as she continued to look rather blank.

"Indeed I do, and if I'd been content to spend the evening with an old gentleman called Browning, nothing





in a voice of singular distinctness, inquired of Phyllis: "With whom did you come?"

would have happened. But I took up with another old gentleman—one Hamerton—who wrote letters to all sorts of ghastly people like: 'A lady who would write poetry, but could never think of a rhyme.' Well, he drove me to *this!*"

"I'm deeply grateful to him. But what is *this?*"

"It's Cinderella's earnest prayer that you may never find out."

"In the meantime, on with the dance." She was magically slender in her rose-and-heliotrope draperies; it was like holding a sheaf of roses—No, with that half-merry, half-sad little face smiling up at him, it was worlds better. Strickland was conscious of having come into a curiously delayed birth-right of youth and midsummer madness. Who was she, anyhow? One of the Baltimore Brookes? At any rate, she was lovely enough to win the approval of even Sir Thomas. Sir Thomas was the baronet from whom the American branch of the family was descended; he had been dead something over a hundred years.

And then "The Blue Danube" came to an end, with a tremendous finale.

"And the deluge?" he questioned.

"Yes." There was a sort of shiver in her voice. "I can hear its waters rolling."

Should she tell him and ask him to get her away? But while she reflected, he said:

"When the Neapolitans had that deluge feeling, they danced the tarantella. Come, we'll kill our tarantism, whatever it may be, with this fox trot."

And as she still hesitated, he said:

"I don't know what it is, little Muse of Comedy, but if you've been playing hooky from some young ladies' seminary, or run off to this dance in your proud sister's ball gown, and the goblins are going to catch you—count on me."

When Strickland led her back to her

seat after the dance, the college cousin was waiting for his turn. The chipmunk girl deliberately avoided Phyllis' eye.

"If you're quite ready," she said frostily to the Black Prince, "I believe this is ours."

And the Muse of Comedy had a vanishing impression of a stony stare and a haughtily flaunted white shoulder. It took her a moment to perceive that she had been cut.

Phyllis was too inexperienced to realize that, while the cut stung like a blow, it represented on the part of the chipmunk girl the sincerest form of flattery. Despite his advanced age, or because of it, Strickland was the colossus of this young person's eighteen-year-old cosmos, Muses of Comedy and others take notice!

Phyllis fairly flung herself into the dance.

"The Neapolitans are not alone in their discovery," she reflected.

In the meantime, the social boycott of the chipmunk girl did not progress, as far as partners were concerned. The sophomore cousin began to feel the importance of an impresario with a star of the first magnitude in his firmament. As some one said afterward:

"The line of partners began to form like a run on a bank."

Her beauty, her costume, her grace, had created a sensation. In a moment, one of those curious ballroom miracles had happened—Cinderella had come, seen, and conquered. Her program was full. Every one was asking, "Who is she?" and no one could answer.

Still smarting from that first cut, she determined to show the girl who had inflicted it how easy was her conquest. She had quite forgotten her own equivocal position at the ball and the granite-faced lady in cerise-velvet at the head of the stairs. Her dancing made one think of some beautiful, bright flying thing the door of whose cage

had been opened, and who for the first time was trying its wings.

Watching her, Strickland became conscious of gravely neglected responsibility. Why had he let it be possible for that crowd of men to monopolize her? She was too childlike, too fine, for such a crude exhibition of preference. As the reincarnation of his cherished old print, in some subtle way she seemed to evoke his protection, and he had let that idiotic college boy hand her about as if she were of the chorus. He made up his mind to find his married sister and turn the girl over to her. She was being absurdly neglected by whoever had brought her.

As he made his way among the circle about the dancers in search of Lily—who always did whatever he asked—he became aware that the orchestra had struck up a strange, clashing melody—something with the insistent reiteration of Eastern music in its rhythmic measures. A tall, spent-looking man, with the profile and the costume of Mephistopheles, bowed low before Strickland's Muse of Comedy. And he recognized Signor Carillo, a South American capitalist whose spectacular entertainments and oblique reputation had enlivened the gossips the preceding winter.

Carillo and Phyllis began the maddest of tangos. The South American introduced several bizarre steps; Phyllis, with the skill of the born dancer, followed. Other couples stopped to watch, and soon Phyllis and the South American Mephisto had the floor pretty well to themselves. The music swung into a tremendous roll that seemed to hold in its barbaric rhythm the scream of hautboys, the roll of tom-toms. Rapture—melancholy—it swept through the ballroom like an infection. The remaining couples paused, still keeping their dancing attitudes, and, like painted figures on a screen, watched those two. The girl's slender body responded almost convulsively to the

music; she marked the accents with her shoulders; she was wrapped in the ecstasy of the dance. Mephisto, black-browed and sinister, capered, half faun, half boulevardier.

The girl seemed to shed about her an electric atmosphere that stirred the blood and made the heart leap. There was something unquenchable within her that would burn as long as she lived—and as long as she lived, hers would be the gift to inspire. Watching her, vivid impressions came to Strickland; his buried ambitions rose clamoring. The great game of humanity—of human liberty—of universal peace—why had he thrown away his message and sold his birthright for a brief?

And then, through the enthralled group of spectators, he saw, as if in a dream, his hostess, hard-faced, cerise clad, walk among them with the authority of an executioner. His heart took a sudden drop; intuitively he knew that the deluge awaited his Muse of Comedy. With a cushiony white hand she signaled to the orchestra to stop playing. Mephisto stopped capering and backed away from the girl; he knew—as rats know—when to desert a sinking ship.

The sudden stopping of the orchestra made the silence ring. And Mrs. Delavain, in a voice of singular distinctness, inquired of Phyllis:

"With whom did you come?"

A startled look ran from eye to eye; the men looked mutely wretched; some of the women seemed flushed to the verge of congestion; nervous souls hid behind their partners. Under the great chandelier stood the Muse of Comedy, alone; the color had drained from her face, but the discomposure in the surrounding faces was not reflected in her own. It bore the marble dignity of a Greek mask of tragedy.

She was about to reply, but some one who had come and stood beside her told her not to speak, and she recog-

nized Strickland, very tall and straight. Nothing in all her life had ever seemed so real as his look of reassuring friendliness.

"I was under the impression, Mrs. Delavain, that you knew this young lady had come with us," he said.

Mrs. Delavain murmured apologies; she signaled to the orchestra to continue. They responded nobly, with an added measure of crash and brass to cover the awkward moment. And soon the ball was again in full swing, thanks to that social sense which works automatically.

Phyllis, who had managed to preserve an admirable erectness while the cup of humiliation passed from her, now whispered to Strickland, who had remained beside her:

"Help me to get away!"

"Not till my sister makes things all right for you."

But Strickland saw that the Muse of Comedy was struggling with dry, choking sobs; so they turned from the house of revelry.

"You must leave me now—and thank you—thank you!"

"I haven't the least intention of leaving you till you're safely home."

"I'm safe now. Here's my dear old—"

Strickland became aware of the measured tread of a policeman, which quickened as he saw them. A moment later and the girl was sobbing on the blue coat with the brass buttons, as if it were her only refuge. The Black Prince looked away; no other conclusion of the evening's adventure could have offended his sensibilities like this. Her attitude was entirely filial. Who was she, anyway? The daughter of this policeman?

As he still hesitated to leave, Officer Clancy, in his richest brogue, assured him:

"Ye need have no fears, sor. She's all the worruld to me."

Strickland turned into a side street, assuring himself:

"In the way of nocturnal adventure, Bagdad appears to have nothing on Washington."

During the next few days, the ex-diplomat took a somber pleasure in dwelling on Sir Thomas Strickland, the baronet from whom the American branch of the family was derived. Reverently he would regard the arms of his family on his cigarette case every time he smoked. And he took down his cherished print of Mrs. Abingdon as *The Muse of Comedy* and locked it in a cupboard. But he also took to walking unfrequented streets—and he scanned every face he met.

And then, late one afternoon, when he happened to be thinking, to the exclusion of everything else, of his return to diplomacy, he saw her flit into a green gate sunk in an old garden wall and marked: "Servants' and Tradesmen's Entrance." He knew she recognized him by the panicky way she fled and closed the gate. Strickland rang the bell politely; then, as there was no answer, he resorted to hammering. The gate continued to present an inhospitable front. The deserted back street tempted him; he vaulted the red brick wall and found a deserted garden for his pains.

It was like coming across some quiet backwater, after a day spent in dodging noisy excursion craft. Neglect had fallen on the old place like a benediction and left it, at this vesper hour, more lovely than ever care could have done. The Lombardy poplars grew ragged to the roots; the gravel walks were grass grown; the pungent boxwood hedge was broken; but the soul of a garden was here. A great horse-chestnut flaunted its pointed white blossoms like a giant Christmas tree, magnificently alight. Strickland took possession of an old summerhouse and awaited events.



"If they find you here, it will make trouble," she said.

Presently Phyllis came from the kitchen door, muffled from chin to hem in a checked blue gingham apron; she carried a wooden bowl of red apples. A white cat followed, gravely distrustful of the stranger. The girl's manner had the repression of the well-trained servant; her hair was rigidly dressed; and yet, withal, she was the Muse of Comedy. She seated herself opposite Strickland and began to peel apples as if it were the real business of life.

"If they find you here, it will make trouble," she said.

"They—they! A lot I care about

them!" he said, with the masterfulness of William the Conqueror wooing Matilda of Flanders.

"Your position is not in danger. Do you think coming here like this is quite fair?"

"It's as fair as *this* ever is. And—were you fair? Here was I, a reasonably contented bachelor of thirty-four, and you cut across the even tenor of my way tricked out like my favorite picture. You play a prank—get yourself in a hole; I fish you out. Do you regard me of sufficient importance to explain your little parlor trick to? Not you! At our next meeting, you at-

tempt to cut me, and then, while casually peeling an apple, you inquire if this is fair?"

"I'm sorry to seem ungrateful." She was primmer than ever now, and there was a highly professional twist in her manner of peeling the apple. "But what can a girl in my position say to a man in yours but 'thank you?' I'm a waitress—I come of a family of waitresses. In our way, we're quite celebrated for our ability to wait."

The mask of his countenance did not change, but back of the mask, he was shocked. She was the policeman's daughter—a servant, in all probability, in this old house. And he, a Strickland, was letting himself go like the butcher's boy. He thought of Sir Thomas and of the ancestor who had been a "signer," and he thought of his winter in Petrograd as second secretary. But opposite him, nullifying these considerations, was the girl, with that look of fineness, that patrician pose of the head, that air of a goddess about her, in spite of her apple peeling.

She had finished all but the last one; her attitude was almost that of dismissal.

"The family with whom I live—two old ladies—would be indignant. It would be as much as my place is worth if they knew I let a man in through the servants' entrance."

"You didn't. I climbed the wall."

"So you did," she said gayly.

When she laughed, she was irresistible; some feeble defenses forming in the back of his mind toppled. Instead, he asked himself what sort of rotten King Cophetua attitude was this he was

taking. She was young, lovely; she had the gift of inspiration. A fig for Sir Thomas and the "signer" and the family coat of arms!

"I haven't anything to offer you but a good old name and a racked old place in Virginia. Life will not be easy. I'm wretchedly poor. But you'll have your own home; you'll be your own mistress—and sometimes you'll dance for me, and the work I want to do in the world will be done. I don't know how, but with you it will be done."

The Muse of Comedy was weeping, not sobbingly as she had the night of the Delavain ball, but very softly. He had said these things to her when she had deliberately masqueraded as a servant! She had thought it would be fun, because, despite his chivalry on the night of the ball, she had thought him a bit of a snob.

"I feel!"—and she had the grace to blush—"that before you go any farther, you ought to know that my name is Colebrooke—not Brooke. I am a waitress—but a waitress in the orphans' court. My grandfather— But I see you know. And now if you'll kindly walk out of the back gate, I'll open the front door for you. This ghostly old place—to-night there is a sort of spectral joy here. Our case— Well, we've got a private tip—the supreme court has decided in our favor."

"All this is—wonderful. But, may I ask, why did you weep on the policeman?"

"Dear old Clancy's been my best friend since I was six. He brought me that cat's great-grandmother. You're not going to be jealous of Clancy, are you?"



Soapsuds *and* White of Eggs

By Royal Brown

Author of "The Minor Details," "Evelyn Forgets," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SAYRE GROESBECK

Gordon Craig, detective, soldier-of-fortune, etc., scores a triumph. A delightful story of a boy, as original and humorous as its title suggests.

GORDON CRAIG walked up the quiet, sunlit street with long, swinging stride. A costly Havana was between his lips. The grave, settled dignity of his face bespoke the man of affairs; the slow, abstracted gesture with which now and then he removed the cigar from his mouth bespoke a mind plunged in thought. Grave, courteous, chivalrous, courageous—a real man among men was *Gordon Craig*; not one to be easily or quickly disconcerted.

Lost in thought, he failed to see Phoebe Sylvester. Phoebe was eighteen, and she was forced to stay at home and do the housework because her mother was an invalid. She mourned the fact that she had no regular spending money, as the girls who worked had, and because she couldn't buy the pretty little gimcracks she craved. That Phoebe was pretty enough without the garniture of gimcracks she herself sometimes suspected, but that did not satisfy her—she wanted them, too. So Phoebe performed her tasks with an air of conscious martyrdom.

But now she smiled, in spite of herself, as she saw *Gordon Craig* cross the street. More than that, she laughed outright. *Gordon Craig* stopped, as if petrified. He hurriedly removed the Havana from his lips; his face became scarlet. Then, with quickened pace, he moved on. He affected not to have seen Phoebe, but when he had gone

some thirty feet, he turned quickly. She was looking after him—and, drat her, she was still laughing at him!

Phoebe's mother heard the laugh.

"What are you doing?" she called fretfully.

"That Jones boy just went by," said Phoebe. "He had a green stalk stuck between his lips and he was pretending he was smoking. He looked so funny I couldn't help laughing right out."

Mrs. Sylvester sighed. To be young, healthy, and to have that blessed gift of easy laughter—what would she not give to annihilate the years that had robbed her of it and her spirit of its resiliency, her body of its ready resistance to weariness and pain? One might better be dead than be as she was. Dead! She let her morbid fancy take up the thought of herself dead and buried, and weave and reweave it into many fantastic patterns, as she often had before. She thought of its effect upon her husband, upon Phoebe—

Gordon Craig threw away his Havana with a gesture of disgust. The Jones boy, however, stopped, appalled at the act, and picked it up. He might have use for it later on. At precisely this moment, Tommy Flip came around the corner. If Tommy had seen *Gordon Craig*, he might have paused. But, surprisingly enough, all that Tommy Flip saw was "Pewee" Jones picking up a bit of green stalk. He crept up behind his perpetual victim and took

him unawares, grasping him by the nape of the neck and working the flesh between his fingers.

"Say 'Uncle,'" he commanded, "or I'll break your neck!"

"Uncle," said Pewee, in an agony of apprehension.

"Come along to school, Honey!" commanded Tommy. "If you don't want to be late, you'd better hurry—although I don't suppose Teacher would do anything but kiss you if you were."

Red hate burned in Pewee's heart. Tommy Flip had offered him the final

and supreme insult. The name "Pewee," expressive of his lack of size, had always been a trial, but even that had a bit of bon camaraderie to it. But "Honey!" Pewee Jones traced this curse back to the day when he had shot up his hand to ask a question, and "Teacher," whose mind had been very, very far away and whose heart had been stirring with a tenderness with which none of the young heathen in front of her had had the slightest thing to do, had asked abstractedly: "What is it, honey?" That she had become

unusually untender the next moment, leaving Pewee to return to his geography with a bitter sense of injustice, had not removed the effects of the greater wrong she had visited on him. "Pewee" had become "Honey" Jones, and there were none so abject as not to call him that.



"I thought," commented Teacher, "that you were unusually studious. You may give me those."

Now, with his soul filled with a desire to annihilate Tommy Flip, while his body turned sick at the thought of actually offering his flesh up to his larger and stronger adversary's blows, he humbly trailed along toward school. Pewee Jones knew that "Snapper" Edwards could lick Tommy Flip, and that "Topsy" Simpson could lick Snapper Edwards, and that "Gee-whiz" Shaughnessey, who regularly "snuk over" the fence at the ball grounds, boasted without fear of contradiction that he could lick any one of them with one hand. Tommy would yell "Uncle" at the top of his lungs if Gee Whiz but leveled a finger at him, but, though Tommy was lowly, Pewee Jones was lowlier.

Once in school, Pewee began the process of spiritual rehabilitation. He drew stealthily from his pocket a card that, badly smudged and blurred, nevertheless remained legible. It was the product of his printing press, and he read it with a feeling of pride:

Gordon Craig
Soldier of -fortune
Secret - Service
Detective work of all kinds
promptly attended to.

The face of Gordon Craig hardened. A woman had laughed at him! An enemy had crept up behind him unawares! So be it! *Gordon Craig* would bide his time. But when the hour of revenge came, let those who had crossed the path of *Gordon Craig* beware!

Tommy Flip saw the glare, which was turned in his direction. He was so surprised that it was an appreciable moment before he could summon his scattered wits to glare back. But Pewee was glaring not at Tommy, but through him at all the unwitting victims of their own temerity who sought to trifle with *Gordon Craig*.

"Henry Jones!" said Teacher.

Pewee shot out of his seat. He looked at Teacher expectantly and be-

came conscious of the fact that she was gazing expectantly at him. He had a sudden sickening sinking of the heart. He had experienced this sensation before when Teacher, sensing his lack of attention, had pounced on him.

"You may stay after school," he heard Teacher say. "The class will now take out its geographies and study southern Europe," she added.

Pewee slumped dizzily into his seat, dove into his desk, and produced his geography. He gazed intently at the map of Europe for five minutes, and then the map suddenly disappeared. Behind the screen the geography offered, Pewee, with the sleight of hand possessed by all schoolboys, had materialized, apparently out of nothing, but actually out of his hip pocket, two pamphlets which were to him what Doctor Eliot would have us believe his five-foot shelf is to the world—they were his compendium of all useful knowledge.

One had a brightly lithographed cover, showing a man swathed in many bandages being carried to an ambulance in a seat improvised by his bearers by the simple process of crossing their hands. It bore the enchanting legend: "First Aid to the Injured," and it had been deposited at Pewee's front door by a man who had then moved to the next house and gone through the same performance and so on down the street. Mrs. Jones had picked it up and condemned it to the wastebasket unread. Pewee had rescued it from there some time later. The other pamphlet was dog-eared and soiled. It bore the title: "The Manly Art of Self-defense," and underneath was the inevitable and wholly appropriate picture.

Pewee drew a deep breath. He knew all that each book contained almost by heart. He could tell you offhand how to stop a nose bleed or how to resuscitate the drowned. He knew the proper defense for any kind of a blow

with which his antagonist might attempt to penetrate his guard, and he knew just how to knock that adversary out. To be able to defend himself at all times and to be able to render first aid to the injured—these were valuable assets to a man who lived the adventurous life that falls, automatically, to a man with a name like *Gordon Craig*.

But reading over his treasures held a fascination for Pewee that never palled. He opened "First Aid to the Injured" haphazardly and began to read, with quickened breath:

POISONS:

Prussic acid—Give patient warm soapsuds, white of eggs.

There were other things catalogued under the general term "emetics" that Pewee read religiously, but his mind stuck at warm soapsuds and white of eggs. These represented themselves in his mind as concrete things. He knew all about "bubble water," and he had pestered the cook until she had, in the interest of peace, shown him how to "make white of eggs" and even let him do it.

Of prussic acid he knew absolutely nothing. But he wished that Teacher or Tommy Flip might take some; soapsuds and white of eggs and Pewee Jones—no, *Gordon Craig*—would fix them.

Pewee, fascinated by this touching picture of triumphant magnanimity his imagination had conjured, gave a little sigh of content. Then he deftly slid the other book up over "First Aid" and opened that.

"The uppercut—" he began.

He stopped suddenly. His heart began to beat more quickly; the palms of his hands grew clammy and moist. He hadn't moved his eyes a fraction of an inch, he had heard nothing, and so what he knew he must have learned through some psychic sense. It may need scientists to explain this phenom-

enon, but every schoolboy has experienced it. Pewee Jones had neither seen Teacher nor heard her, but he knew that she stood behind him.

He stared dumbly ahead for a minute, while the muscles of the back of his neck twitched with the sense of that awful scrutiny. Then, slowly, unwillingly, he met Teacher's eyes and then instantly evaded them again. Pewee Jones was that most miserable of mortals, a small boy caught in the commission of that most heinous crime, introducing contraband reading matter into his geography during the study period.

"I thought," commented Teacher, "that you were unusually studious. You may give me those."

Pewee did so. Then he looked down at the floor, seeking sanctuary for his unhappy eyes. Instead, he unearthed a new terror. At the base of his seat lay a card. He knew what that card said and unwisely he sought to put his foot over it.

"You may also give me that," added Teacher.

He did so. Pewee Jones, at the age of eleven, had quaffed to its dregs the draft of despair life prepares for all of us.

Teacher took the card. Another time she might have been quicker to sympathize, less harsh. She knew her boys far better than those boys suspected. But this morning these very boys were a horror to her. They represented not only fifty youngsters awaiting present instruction, but future generations of boys as well, all clamoring for instruction—*her* instruction. She saw an endless vista of boyish faces stretching down the years ahead; and then she saw these boys growing up and becoming men—unreasonable, unfeeling men, who trifled with and then broke the hearts of the women who loved them. So she hardened her heart, did what she knew was cruel—she read the card,



Gordon Craig said nothing. He strode forward through the lane that opened respectfully before him. There was fierce triumph in his heart.

with its pitifully smudged printing, aloud.

The class snickered, but she pretended not to hear.

"I am glad to know of you, Mr. Craig," she said. "If I want any detective work done, I will be glad to use you. May I suggest that for the present, however, you confine your efforts to trying to discover what the imports and exports of Spain are?"

She walked to her desk and sat down, hating herself as much as Pewee Jones hated her at that moment. *He*—and she did not mean Pewee—had been right when *he* had said that she had no heart. If she could only catch a glimpse of *him*! If she could only know whether he had fulfilled his threat, given up his practice, and gone where he would "never, never see her again!"

When the session ended, Pewee saw the other pupils file out, and was passionately glad that he must stay. To face them now would be more than flesh and blood could stand. He raised his eyes to glower furtively at Teacher. The glower faded away and left only a look of amazement. Teacher had her head on the desk. Was she sick? He reached instinctively for "First Aid" and then remembered that he no longer possessed that book. The fires of indignation blazed anew.

Teacher raised her head.

"You may go now," she said briefly.

Pewee gasped. *She had been crying!* Teacher smiled wearily. She had wept before one of her pupils—but she was past caring what she did.

Pewee catapulted himself out of school with the missilelike velocity common to his kind. Then he stopped short. He had run into the camp of his enemies and tormentors.

"Honey, Honey!" chanted Tommy Flip. "Did Teacher keep you after school to kiss yer?"

Pewee's face went white—and presumably his liver went white to match

it, for he affected not to notice Tommy Flip. But Tommy was not to be denied.

"I'm glad to know yer, Mr. Craig," he mimicked. "If I want any detective work done, I will be glad to use you."

Tommy was dancing up and down in front of him, but Pewee did not see him. The white heat of transmuting rage that possessed his body and soul blinded his eyes. And *Gordon Craig* was standing in front of Tommy, fists clenched—but Tommy did not see him. Tommy thought it was Pewee Jones who struck him—a regular uppercut it was—but he was wrong. *Gordon Craig* delivered that blow. Tommy stopped short. His hands were raised to his jolted chin.

"What's the matter?" he whimpered. "I was only foolin'."

Gordon Craig said nothing. He strode forward through the lane that opened respectfully before him. There was fierce triumph in his heart. *Gordon Craig* could bide his time—but when *Gordon Craig* acted!

And now, once more, *Gordon Craig* walked up the quiet, sunlit street. A costly Havana was between his lips. And again he was lost in his thoughts, and again Phoebe Sylvester saw him before he saw her.

"Henry Jones!" she cried, and the cry had in it a note of anguish.

Phoebe no longer felt abused—she was facing a real tragedy. Mrs. Sylvester had played too long with the thought of death lurking in the glass confines of a bottle with a sinister label that had long stood in the recesses of the medicine chest in the Sylvester home. Without having really intended to do any more than hold the bottle in her hands, or at the most to place it to her lips, that she might play with the sensation of death held at hand, yet at bay, she had taken it from its accustomed place. She had never intended to empty its contents down her throat;

it was with a sick wonder that she had found she had.

Then had come the agonized revulsion. She did not want to die! Better life at any price than that! Her terrified, agonized scream had brought

stead, he ran up onto the Sylvester porch.

"Run, run!" besought Phoebe. But Pewee stumbled into the house instead. Phoebe gave a quick sob of despair, and, hatless and coatless, ran for the doctor herself. Pewee did not even notice that she had gone.

"Warm soapsuds and white of eggs," he was repeating to himself over and over again. He felt queer and a bit giddy; it was as if the words, running incoherently through his mind, were inducing self-hypnosis.



The doctor gasped. "Where in thunder do you go to school?" he asked.

Phoebe up the stairs with flying feet. The look on her mother's face and one glance at the bottle with the sinister label had sent her down again.

"Henry Jones, run for the doctor! Mother's taken poison!" she shouted.

Phoebe did not see Gordon Craig; she saw only Pewee Jones. And Pewee Jones did not go for the doctor. In-

There was a moan from abovestairs. Gordon Craig threw his Havana away and ran to the Sylvester kitchen. Phoebe had planned to have cake for supper; the flour, the butter, the milk, and the eggs were on the kitchen table.

"Warm soapsuds and white of eggs," he repeated.

The white-faced, wild-eyed woman

abovestairs knew that Death had his bony fingers on her heart. When a scared, but exalted, terrified, but thrilled, boy appeared at the door, she did not stop to question or reason.

"Drink it!" he said, and she drank.

Fear of death had her by the throat; she drank the nauseating beverages as greedily and as gladly as if they had been the elixir of the gods. In the distressing moments that followed, when it seemed as if the end of Mrs. Sylvester had been hastened rather than retarded, *Gordon Craig* stole away, and when Phoebe came back with the young doctor before whom she had appeared just as he was giving directions to an expressman about a trunk that stood in the hall outside his office, they found only a frightened boy and an agonized woman whose body still vibrated with the horror of the moment when it had seemed as if it and her soul must part.

"I—I gave her an emetic," stammered Pewee.

The young doctor snatched up the vial with the sinister label.

"Prussic acid," he muttered. "Soap-suds and white of eggs."

The young doctor told Phoebe that all he could do was to "finish up the job." And he added that which made Phoebe throw her arms about the neck of *Gordon Craig* and say:

"Oh, Henry, how can I ever thank you? If it hadn't been for you, mother might have died!"

This was rather tedious, but then it was part of the day's work with *Gordon Craig*.

The young doctor suddenly said:

"Well, young man, who ever told you about an emetic?"

But *Gordon Craig* was not so easily disconcerted.

"Oh, it was very simple," he said.

"I find such knowledge a good thing."

The doctor gasped.

"Where in thunder do you go to school?" he asked. He was adjusting his cuffs with methodical haste, but he paused abruptly at the answer.

"What is the name of your teacher?" he asked eagerly. Then he forgot all about his cuffs and everything else, for the moment, except the questions he put to Pewee, all of which were a trifle breathless and seemed to have no bearing on the matter at hand.

"Is—is Miss Frisbie well?" he asked finally. "Does—does she seem happy?"

"Why, I guess she's well enough," answered Pewee, "but I think she feels bad about something, because she cried after school to-day."

Five minutes later, *Gordon Craig* resumed his homeward way, the possessor of a considerable fortune. It had been presented by the doctor, and it consisted of the princely sum of one dollar. After presenting it, the doctor had snatched his hat and, without stopping to fix his cuffs, had gone off down the street toward the schoolhouse so fast that it seemed as if he couldn't keep up with himself unless he broke into a run.

It was Pewee Jones that his mother sent to bed that night, but it was *Gordon Craig* that went. He fell asleep quickly and slept soundly. The enemy who had sought to annihilate him had been humbled in accordance with the best traditions of *Gordon Craig*; the beautiful woman who had laughed him to scorn had wept her repentance on his shoulder. But it was not of her that *Gordon Craig* dreamed.

Another and, to his mind, a fairer face—the face of the woman that *Gordon Craig* loved in vain—occupied his dreams. She had visited every indignity upon him, but he loved her in spite of them all. And now he dreamed that the young doctor had taken him to her, and that Miss Frisbie had raised her beautiful, tear-stained face to say:

"Gordon, my darling, I love you!"

True Love

By Anne Spottswood Young

Author of "The Hotel Baby," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

This is best described by calling it a story of home. It will do any one good to read it.

A TWO-PART STORY. PART I.

LOVE had come to her. Joy filled her heart, bringing a deeper loveliness to her eyes, a new grace and buoyancy to every motion. Mingled with happiness was a curious sympathy for her father and for Aunt Polly, entirely grown up and beyond the pale of love. How could any one be irritated over delay in the delivery of collars and shirts from the laundry, worry about the nonarrival of groceries, deplore the wear and tear upon table linen, or bother with an overcharge on the butcher bill, when *love* was in the world? And her mother! After hovering between life and death in a near-by city hospital, her mother's dearest wish was to be home again, just to be home, and busy once more with prosaic household matters!

Still, there were moments when the rosy clouds in which pretty Genevieve Drew floated drifted apart long enough to give her disturbing glimpses of a serene blue sky of marvelous depth even in her own home. There had been something she could not fathom in her father's tense aloofness during the darkest days of her mother's illness, a thrilling note in his quiet announcement at last, "Mother is going to get well, dear," and something puzzlingly dramatic in the way he looked long at the brief telegram that brought

the final good word. As for Aunt Polly, for the first time during the strain, she had frankly "gone to pieces," but all she had said was:

"I know, Harry! I understand! I went through it when Jim was hurt."

Surely, however, this was affection that they showed for one another, not love! Love did not take refuge in silence. It rippled forth in song, sparkled in laughter, effervesced in nonsensical chatter, brightened every day with rainbow glory, filled every night with happy dreams. *Truesdale Ellis*—what a name to conjure with! His best friends called him "True," he had told her, and often she murmured, "True Love," laughing like a child over the double meaning in the words.

Entering her small world soon after her mother had been stricken ill, he had remained in Humphreys, or in neighboring towns, delayed by business, for three months; though it had taken him just three days to discover the little beauty of Hill House, the big, comfortable home that topped the steep incline at the end of Main Street. Sparkling with fun, gifted with blithe laughter, scrupulously courteous and thoughtful, polished, traveled, expert at games of all kinds, familiar with every new dance step in the calendar, his popularity had been instantaneous,

bearing as he did the finest of introductions from widely known metropolitan firms.

Genevieve constantly compared with him in her thoughts the rollicking group of boys she had known since kindergarten days, and always to their disadvantage. What did they—even Gordon Hamilton—know about love? Gordon could not depart in the slightest degree from brotherly affection without becoming strangely flustered. Not so Truesdale Ellis!

To her father, Genevieve was still a little girl. Aunt Polly, household manager in the mother's prolonged absence, not only shared this opinion, but had no daughters of her own, her motherly care being confined to three sturdy, lively boys. Yet even she could not fail to notice how Genevieve's beauty increased as the weeks went past.

"The child is lovely, Harry!" she confided to her brother; at which he beamed complacently.

"She is a pretty kitten, isn't she?" he agreed, but they would have been amazed had they guessed the tumult in the "child's" heart, the conflicting emotions that were swaying the "kitten" day by day, even though Truesdale's love-making thus far had been more by delicate insinuations, significant silences, and smiles, than by word of mouth.

Summertime was at its height, and Genevieve, in the softest of dainty gowns, sat alone on the porch amid a riot of shimmering vines, their shadow traceries playing over her dress and hair, the moon in all its harvest glory shining full upon her. The gate clicked, and at the sound the girl's heart pounded riotously, then seemed to stop for a sickening second, for the man who came quickly up the walk was not Truesdale Ellis, but Gordon Hamilton, coolly and most attractively ar-

rayed, his charm to-night doomed to pass unnoticed.

"Hello, Jinks!" said he, with the assurance of one who comes often and feels sure of welcome. "Folks out?"

"Father and Aunt Polly have gone over to the Elliots'. They won't be long," answered his young hostess, striving to smother her disappointment and evidently succeeding, for Gordon tossed his hat aside, stretched himself comfortably on the top step, and answered contentedly:

"They needn't hurry on my account! How's your mother?"

"Not really well yet, of course, but strong enough to come home to-morrow!"

"Good! Say, that's some little costume you're wearing to-night! New?"

"Yes, father let me buy it the last time we went into the city to see mother," she answered languidly; at which Gordon laughed, accustomed as he was to her moods.

"Not talkative, are we?" he teased. "Want a soda? Want to ride in my machine? Want to go to a picture show? Any one here to look after the house?"

"Oh, yes, Bridget is in the kitchen," came the indifferent answer, "but I don't want to ride or go downtown. I'm tired!"

"Tired? You don't look it!" He gazed at her, puzzled now. "Not mad at me, are you?"

"Of course not! What could I possibly be mad about?" she replied, with the quick irritability that lately had been difficult to hold in leash when Gordon was present. Then, instantly sorry for both tone and manner, she left her chair and sank down beside him, fresh, sweet, elusively fragrant, a bewitching rosebud of a girl. They apparently drifted into one of their usual congenial times together, interspersed with rippling laughter. But through all the conversation, Genevieve's thoughts flew



The girl's heart pounded riotously, then seemed to stop for a sickening second, for the man who came quickly up the walk was not Truesdale Ellis.



"Oh, no," laughed the other easily. "I'm looking for an important letter at the post office to-night so I must be off, anyway."

persistently to Truesdale. She caught every footstep on the pavement, listened till the pedestrian reached the gate, and suppressed a resentful sigh when the gate did not click to admit the one of all others she most wanted to see.

Surely he was coming, for last night he had told her definitely that he loved her. Last night he had thrilled her with a new and intoxicating joy. She was his queen, his gypsy, his dear—and, alas, there had been other names

ready to fall from his lips if only Aunt Polly had not called them to the veranda to partake of sponge cake and raspberry shrub! Soon after that he had gone, with no chance of another word with him alone, for what had her father done but become absorbed in city politics and walk down the hill with him, never thinking for a moment that he might possibly be calling upon her alone.

He did not care for her or he would not stay away. Thus she speculated

for the sweet torture of it, to recall the next moment his passionate words of love. A silence fell between her and Gordon, a chill, faint, indefinable, but none the less real, and suddenly came a startling question.

"Say, Genevieve, what do you know about this fellow Ellis?"

This fellow Ellis! With a gasp as if she had unexpectedly been plunged into an icy bath, she sprang to the defense of the absent one.

"I know he behaves and acts like a gentleman!" she flashed, uncomfortably conscious that her words sounded a bit more dramatic than the occasion warranted. Gordon's amused laughter, therefore, added fuel to the growing flame of her anger.

"Admitted!" said he. "But if you are going to more than like him, Jinks, you'd better go slow till we look into his record."

"And if I should *more than like him*," she asked, with a gentleness belied by the sparkle of wrath in her eyes, "it isn't any affair of yours, is it?"

Gordon laughed again, but less spontaneously.

"Perhaps not; perhaps so. Let that pass! You have no brother, and your mother has been away so long, and— Oh, I don't like him, Genevieve! He doesn't ring quite true!"

"That's just what he does do!" Silence for a moment. Then: "You seem entirely to forget, Gordon, that I have a father and an Aunt Polly to look after me while mother is away!"

Irritation almost conquered Gordon, but after a glance at the absurdly dignified demeanor of the pretty girl beside him, his sense of humor came to the rescue.

"Now, look here, Jinks, don't get uppity with me! Your father is the finest man I know, and your Aunt Polly has certainly won my heart during her visit, but I can't for the life of me see

what they have to do with this conversation. They don't know that you have grown up this summer, and I do know it! So would your mother if she had been home, and I'm *mighty glad* she's coming to-morrow. But don't let's have a fuss over nothing!"

"It isn't over nothing!"

"It looks like 'nothing' to me when a comparative stranger like Truesdale Ellis comes between me and a girl I've known always." There was a note in his voice that made her anger melt at once. It was always so with their misunderstandings—quick to descend upon them, just as quick to pass away. "Forget it! Come on downtown and see a movie. They have some dandy new reels in and——"

He paused and rose, for the gate had clicked and up the path came Truesdale Ellis, languidly graceful, walking slowly and yet more slowly as he caught sight of Gordon.

"I can't go now!"

Genevieve rose also, a radiant figure of youth and happiness.

"I see you can't," he answered coolly; adding, in response to the newcomer's greeting, "Good evening, Ellis," but not holding out his hand, not taking his eyes from Genevieve's speaking countenance.

"Don't let me drive you away, Hamilton," Truesdale urged, as Gordon picked up his hat.

"Oh, no," laughed the other easily. "I'm looking for an important letter at the post office to-night, so I must be off, anyway."

"Sorry!"

Truesdale waited, courteously regretful.

"So am I!" came quickly from Genevieve, and Gordon, though he knew full well that her words indicated only penitence for their half quarrel, responded good-naturedly, waved his hat, and was gone.

"Very sorry?" asked Truesdale,

reaching out for a little hand that fluttered in his grasp, then lay still.

"Not—very," with an effort. "But you are late. I was afraid you were not coming."

He drew her down the steps gently. "I would come to-night of all nights!"

Some of the radiance died out of her eyes, and a vague dread took its place. Tender as his tone was, there was a note in his voice that boded ill.

"Of all nights?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes, my dearest of dear girls, but let's go out into the garden and talk it over, shall we? First, however, may I pay my respects to your father and aunt? Are they at home?" And when she had explained their absence, "Ah, I'm selfishly glad, for now I shall have you all to myself for a little while. Come!"

She obeyed as one in a dream, gazing up at him, eager, yet afraid to hear sweet cool of the garden, fragrant with what he had to say. Down into the summer bloom, odorous of box hedge, they strolled, alone together in a world of moonlight and love, but she trembled at his touch when he came too near and bent over her.

"No—don't!"

"Why not, dear?"

"I don't know why not! I—I'm afraid!"

"What a dear little nun she is! You would have let me kiss you last night if we hadn't been called back to the house, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know!"

"All right. I won't trouble you," he soothed. She was wonderfully lovely at the moment, and he stepped away, breathing fast and hard, watching her gravely as she hesitated, fascinated, on guard, ready to flee, but longing to stay. "I had so hoped you returned my love, and now I fear I must—go away forever—disappointed!"

A master stroke! No thought of flight now! She came nearer, all the color gone from her exquisite face, suddenly white like a night flower.

"Going away? Forever?"

His fingers bit into his arms as he held them by main force crossed upon his breast.

"My firm has sent me word that I must go West to-night."

"To-night!"

"On the midnight express. So this hour with you is very precious—at least to me!"

"You are cruel! To me, too! When are you coming back?"

"It may not be necessary to come back at all."

"Won't be necessary? What do you mean?"

She folded her hands over her throat. Her heart seemed to have leaped there and to be struggling for freedom. All the light was gone from the moon, all the perfume departed from the flowers. Nothing remained but this tragic black cloud that had enveloped her. He was going away and would not return! Then, at a word from him, back came the radiance, the fragrance, to the garden in an overwhelming rush.

"Do you think for one minute I could leave you—you *darling!*"

So sudden was the reaction from shocked dismay to joyous relief that she swayed faintly, and at once he caught her in his arms. Ignoring her half-dazed efforts to escape, he held her fast, crushing down words of protest with hot kisses upon her hair, her mouth, her rose-leaf cheeks. Finally, as she lay frightened, but quiescent in his clasp, he pressed his lips to the quivering white eyelids which had closed over eyes that could not bear yet, without faltering, even one glimpse into a new and unknown world of bewildering happiness.

But was it joy alone? She scarcely knew, so swiftly did conflicting emo-

tions sweep over her. She tried to sense the hurried words he was pouring into her ears, but felt smothered, buffeted, alarmed at her own sensations.

"Dear, listen to me! Time is short now! Nothing in the world is great but love! Love is the only thing worth having, worth living for! When a man and woman love as we love, darling, nothing else matters. Everything goes down before love—parents, home, all the old ties and associations, the old friendships. Love must have all or nothing. You love me?"

"Yes, yes, but——"

"Then nothing else matters! Come with me! Go with me!"

The sweet eyes opened in alarm, but she made no move to leave the shelter of his arms.

"Go where?"

"West, dear, to-night! All the arrangements are made! Here are your tickets!" He released her for a moment, fumbled in his vest pocket, and pressed a small railroad envelope into her hand. "Your Pullman-section ticket is here, too. No one will guess anything. I travel on mileage, so when they inquire, they will find that I have bought accommodations for one. All you have to do is to meet me at the station a few minutes before train time. Wear that beautiful little dark suit you have, and put a veil over your face, and stay in the shadow when you

- 6



"But why do we, you and I, love each other so differently from other people? I don't understand, dear."

reach the station. I'll keep that garrulous ticket agent busy talking if he's about, and I'll come to you the moment we leave Lewiston. That's only twenty minutes' ride from Humphreys, you know. After that we are safe, for there's no other stop till to-morrow."

"But I can't! Mother is coming home to-morrow! Father doesn't even know that we care for one another! He misses me when I am away just a few hours! He would never let me go!"

He kissed her again, but she was too troubled to respond to his caress.

"You dear little thing! Of course he wouldn't let you go. Who would? No one must know! You will be a trifle frightened, perhaps, but remember you'll be alone only twenty minutes. Then I'll come to you. That won't be long, will it? Think, dear—twenty minutes; then only love in the world for you and for me!"

"But I couldn't go without saying good-by to father!"

"You prefer to say good-by to me, do you?"

"No! No!" She clung to him. "But isn't there some other way?"

"No other way when two people love as you and I love!"

She struggled away from him, placing her hands on his breast and holding him off, asking, with the quaint wisdom that was one of her chief charms:

"But why do we, you and I, True, love each other so differently from other people? I don't understand, dear!"

"Darling, could any love be like ours? Doesn't something far within you tell you that our love is different, greatly, splendidly different?"

"It does, oh, it does!"

Her voice broke. "But I love my father and mother, too. They would never understand it if I ran away! Let me tell father—do!"

"Good-by!"

"No!" she appealed.

"Love that is not great enough to leave everything is not great at all!"

He walked away, and she watched him go with blanching face, poised tiptoe in

the grass, hands clenched, silent, dumb with misery. But he whirled about after a dozen steps and came back to her, and she dropped into his arms, crying out to him to help her to decide.

"Help you? Of course I will help you! Dear, this love for your parents is very right and very beautiful, but it is greater on your part than on theirs.

What are they thinking of to hide you away amid the hills of this pretty, but sleepy town? What chance have you here with your beauty, your youth, your slim, exquisite grace?"

He bent over her distressed face, but she pushed him away again, trying, in her excitement and confusion, to reason and to think connectedly. It had never occurred to her that she was "hidden away" in Humphreys, filled with her friends, gay with wholesome pleasures. Her books, her clothes, her music, her gifts, her simple jewelry, all were of the best. Almost every article she treasured was a memento of some happy trip to the city with father or mother. What he said couldn't be true, but she only wailed helplessly:

"You don't understand!"



She hurried so fast through this danger spot that her suitcase bruised her at every step.

"I understand too well," said he sadly. "It is good-by to me, instead of a beautiful journey together, forsaking all other."

Forsaking all other! That was part of the marriage ceremony itself, and it had instant effect upon her.

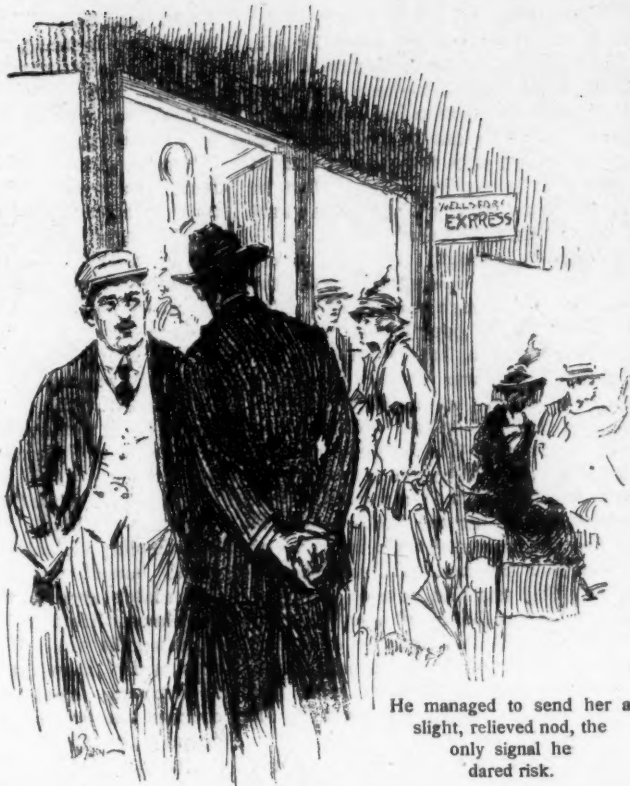
"True, don't be angry! You see, here in Humphreys girls don't run away to be married—nice girls, that is. We always have pretty weddings, with flowers and music and bridesmaids and ushers and trousseaus!"

"You shall have such a trousseau as you never dreamed of!"

"But father will give me my trousseau! Couldn't we go right over to the Elliotts' now, and bring him home, and tell him just how it is, and——"

"You've chosen, dear! Good-by!"

Again he turned away, making no motion to come back. She knew she would never see him again if she let him go, but she waited in a tumult of indecision. He had reached the end of the path. He had opened the gate. He had started down the hill to fade out of her life forever. She couldn't stand it! She couldn't bear it!



He managed to send her a slight, relieved nod, the only signal he dared risk.

"True!" she cried, and it was the call of surrender, for when he returned, his promises, his sweet assurances, drowned every warning in the foolish little heart throbbing with midsummer madness.

Midsummer madness in the heart of a slip of a girl—midsummer madness, but strong enough to last unwaveringly when he bade her a temporary good night; buoyant enough to enable her to act as usual to her father and aunt when they returned; powerful enough to give her courage to pack a few belongings and to steal out of the house like a thief in the night. As she worked and planned, she found herself

possessed of but one idea—to reach Truesdale without discovery. She was fearful only lest something should happen to detain her, to keep her from going to the man who had so suddenly become the only one in the world, torturing herself with the thought that he might not be waiting for her, that he might miss the train, or that she might be overtaken and brought back.

Strangely enough, her chief dread was of Gordon, perhaps because she had to pass through one brilliant patch of electric light opposite his house to reach the station, but to her great relief his home was entirely dark, his machine drawn up under the portecochère for the night. She hurried so fast through this danger spot that her suit case bruised her at every step.

The whistle of the train sounded just as she slipped into the darkest shadows of the platform and sank into one of the outside benches. He was already there. She saw him at once, engaging Hiram Bates, the ticket agent, in conversation. He managed to send her a slight, relieved nod, the only signal he dared risk, for Hiram knew her well and took a keen interest in all town gossip.

A gleaming eye appeared far down the railroad; another whistle sounded, nearer and more shrill; then came the peculiar ticking of the tracks as they sang under their burden, the whirring of wheels, the hiss of steam, the grinding of machinery, as, with thunderous dignity, the beautiful Western Express glided into Humphreys and deigned to pause for a few moments. One of the car doors opened, and down the steps leaped a white-clad, ebony-faced, jovial porter.

"All aboard!" came a call from a conductor, who had followed more leisurely.

Genevieve, amid the shadows, rose

to her feet, then stood still, unable to take a step forward, rooted to the spot in an utterly unexpected panic of fright. Truesdale, already on the steps, looked back over his shoulder, took in the situation and said lightly:

"Just a minute, conductor! I think there is another passenger. Here, *porter!* The lady is having trouble with her baggage!"

The porter sprang forward with apologies, Truesdale following him, a concerned and courteous gentleman, glad to assist a traveling companion in any way possible. Genevieve felt Hiram's eyes turned upon her. She fully realized the danger of the moment, but it was not until Truesdale's hand touched her arm that the spell was broken.

"I couldn't move!" she breathed.

"Hush—darling! Hurry!"

Trembling violently, she obeyed, and found herself on the train at last, Truesdale's arm as steady as steel as he almost lifted her aboard. How handsome he was! How cool and self-possessed! How carefree, unafraid, undismayed, even now when her courage had so deplorably failed him, drawing the attention of conductor and porter away from her and toward himself by a witty remark that aroused their delighted laughter!

He crossed at once to the opposite platform, still talking to the conductor, and she turned to look back. The porter, lithe as a cat, swung himself onto the steps with her suit case, and closed the door. Through its thick glass she saw one familiar object after another flash before her eyes and disappear; and then darkness—a moving picture she was never to forget. Crunkety-crunch! Crunkety-crunch! Faster and yet faster the wheels were taking up the rhythmical refrain. The journey had begun.

Grabbing It Off

BY
HOLMAN F. DAY.



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

Cap'n Sproul attends to the case of Bart Flanders, "puts one over" on Hiram Look, and injects a little humanity into the running of "town business."

UNCLE BARNETT TITUS rose and towered over Squire Lemuel Somes and beat a tattoo with hard little fists on the lawyer's dusty table.

"Condemn ye, I'm here to buy law, not soft soap!" squeaked the client.

"I have neither commodity to sell—not in your case," stated the squire calmly.

"Your sign is out—for law, I mean."

"Right!" The squire began to fill his pipe. "But there's no sign advertising that I'm a public persecutor, Uncle Barnett. Following up poor old Zed Andrews with that claim is persecution, and I'll have nothing to do with it."

"It's plain enough to be seen why you never got any more forehanded in the world!" snarled Uncle Barnett, with a flourish of his hand to take in the squire's ill-furnished office. He turned

on Cap'n Aaron Sproul, who had desk room in one corner of the office for his modest real-estate business. "I'd advise ye to stand Lem Somes up in a corner, Cap'n Sproul, and warm his ear wax with good advice. He has never listened to anybody else, but he may hark to you." He pulled out a big wallet and plucked from it a bank note with moistened thumb and finger. "Here's the ten dollars I had ready to buy law with. Ye might have had it. Smell of it!" He fanned the money under the lawyer's nose and returned the bill to the fat wallet. "I bid ye good day."

He marched out and stamped downstairs.

Squire Somes lighted his pipe, smiling his placid smile.

"Until I hired this corner of your law office," growled the cap'n, "I never realized how many land pirates can

be packed into the population of one town."

"Human nature must cause the judicious among the angels to grieve when they lean over the parapet of heaven to listen," said the squire.

"I don't believe I shall rate Ar as an angel, if I'm allowed to listen," affirmed Cap'n Sproul. "If I overhear some of the talk that's made by the skinflints of this town, I'll heave over that parapet anything that I can get my hands on! However, I don't know as that would have any good effect; the old critters down here would run to get in range of gold paving blocks and would die perfectly happy if one hit 'em."

"I'm afraid so, cap'n."

"The dirty impudence of that walking bill file, insulting you because you won't make money by helping him rob folks!" blustered the cap'n. "Twitting you because you ain't padded with stolen money!"

"My bread and milk will taste better than a steak dinner bought with Titus' money," said the squire with serenity.

"And there's Bart Flanders riding into the square behind that old white mare of his," the cap'n proceeded, scowling out of the window. "One of her ears goes up when anybody whispers eight per cent from the sidewalk, two ears when she hears ten per cent, and she stops dead still when it's twelve per cent. And, by thunder, she must have heard me! She has stopped."

The squire fondled the ears of his old dog, Eli, who sat beside his master's armchair.

"It's as Eli frequently remarks, Cap'n Sproul. 'The way to be happy is to pay no attention to how much meat the other dog has on his bone.'"

"I have salted fifty thousand dollars away, and I'll admit it," stated the cap'n. "But I earned it honest, sloshing about the seas. I didn't steal it from

widders and orphans, like they're doing in this town."

And then Mr. Flanders entered. He was a tall man who walked with a sort of goose step on account of a stiff knee, and he came down so solidly on that ramrod member that his jowls were joggled at every step. He exhibited unctuous cordiality toward the cap'n, and the cap'n understood the attitude perfectly; Mr. Flanders was paying homage to the cap'n's fifty thousand dollars. For Squire Somes, Mr. Flanders had not so much amiability. He tossed a document on the table in front of the lawyer.

"There's a deed you drew up for me a spell ago, squire. I want you to look it over and tell me if there's anything in it about a right of way."

"There is not," stated the lawyer, after hasty inspection. "I remember the deed. It's a quitclaim from your brother, Arno. It gives you possession of his half of the home place."

"That's it! Possession. It's mine, ain't it?"

"It's yours," said the squire dryly.

"It ain't my fault if my brother fiddle-dee-deed away his property. Borrowing is business, even if it is between brothers. He borrowed from me and I made him pay. Nothing else to it." Mr. Flanders drove his stiff leg down upon the floor. "Now he wants to traipse and trespass across what is mine. You say that any right of way ain't mentioned in that deed. Very well! I'll have the law on him."

"You say that he is trespassing?"

"Every Sunday," averred Mr. Flanders. "Crosses my field to lug flowers into the family graveyard in the middle of the ten-acre lot. I have even ketched him picking flowers in my field. No sense in it. All tomrot. Shall have it stopped by law."

"What does he do with the flowers?"

"Spreads 'em around over mother's grave. Clutters up the whole place.

Just as if dead folks wanted to be catered to that way!"

"I don't think I'd insist on the straight letter of the law in this case, Bart. Keeping your own brother away from your mother's grave simply because there's no mention of right of way in the deed is pulling matters a bit taut. Speech of the people——"

"Speech of the people—poosh! The folks in this town ain't going to do much talking about me. Too many of 'em owe me money. It's money that talks. And money says something worth while when it talks. It can't be answered. I'll let mine talk back to any of the gab and yap that's spilled in this town about me. Now what can be done to a man who trespasses?"

"He can be jailed if he persists after he has been duly warned."

"All right, I'll jail him. He'd better be in jail than on the poor farm where he's due."

Squire Somes refolded the deed and pushed it back across the table. Then he opened a big law book and settled himself to read.

"Looking up some law for me?" inquired Mr. Flanders after a pause.

"No, sir."

"I stand ready to buy some. If I let him set an example by traipsing acrost my land, then others will follow suit. Give me legal papers so I can handle him."

"I'll have nothing to do with the affair," stated the lawyer, not lifting his eyes from his book.

"I didn't expect you would," returned Flanders with considerable venom. "I only asked you so that you could show yourself up as a half-baked lawyer here before a straight business man like Cap'n Sproul. Business men like you and me, cap'n, need a real lawyer here in town—a lawyer who will do things when he is asked. I'm going to encourage one to settle here, and I ask

you to join me and others and patronize him."

"Haven't you got any remarks to offer?" demanded Cap'n Sproul of the squire.

"I have finished all my business with Bart," stated the squire calmly.

"And I'm all done with half-baked lawyers."

"Then will you kindly step over into my office?" invited the cap'n, crooking his finger, and Mr. Flanders replied with alacrity, stumping four steps and arriving at the cap'n's desk.

"I never jump into any other man's business," stated Cap'n Sproul. "I was sitting here tending strictly to real estate. Kindly remember that you dragged me away from that business just now."

"I only mentioned that I'd like to have you give your business to a real lawyer."

"It was dragging me in," insisted the cap'n. "Didn't ask to be dragged in. Didn't want to be. But now that I'm in, spite of all I could do to keep out, I'll start in easy with you by saying that Cain would have made a chum of you if you had lived in his day, and if you ever fell overboard and a blue-gilled tortigus shark ketched ye, he would apologize to his family for bringing home such pizen grub."

Mr. Flanders gasped.

"I'm gentle and mild spoken," proceeded the cap'n, "and so I have only started in easy with you. But don't get me mad. I may say something hateful."

The caller backed away, slowly pivoting on his stiff leg.

"I reckon it's about as your friend Hiram Look says about you," he said when he was within reach of the door. "And I thank the Lord this town woke up to a realizing sense in good season and has elected him first selectman instead of you. He has done more in his first two days toward putting this town



"Out with it, Widow Blake," he said brusquely. "What can I do for you?"

on a business basis than you did in your whole two years."

"What does the Honer'ble Hiram Look say about me?" asked the cap'n in grating tones.

"He says——" But Mr. Flanders noted that Cap'n Sproul had picked up one of the four marlinespikes that served him as paper weights. "Go ask him. He probably ain't too bashful to tell ye!" Then he dodged out.

Cap'n Sproul rose and took his hat from its peg.

"I wouldn't allow the word of that old rapscaillon to make trouble between friends," advised the squire in mild tones.

"I'm naturally of an inquiring disposition," explained Cap'n Sproul. "And if Hime Look is saying anything special about me behind my back, he

ain't any friend. You can't break what's already busted."

The cap'n found the new selectman in the town office, and Mr. Look had signalized his accession to high estate by the purchase of a new and particularly shiny plug hat, and he faced the cap'n's scowl with imperturbable countenance.

"What are you saying about me behind my back?" the cap'n demanded.

"Who says I am saying anything?"

"That infernal old dot-and-carry-one who has just rushed in here ahead of me."

"I ask you to use different language toward a business partner of mine," was Mr. Look's stiff rejoinder.

"Business partner! If you had joined old Cap Kidd in his palmy days, would you have called it going into business?"

"Mr. Flanders and I are doing some good with our money instead of letting it loaf in the bank like yours is doing."

"You don't mean to tell me that you have gone in silent partner with this loan shark, do you?"

"I don't know of any better service I can do for the poor and distressed of this town than let them have a little ready cash through the hands of Mr. Flanders."

"At what per cent?"

"None of your blamed business!" shouted Mr. Flanders, emboldened by the presence of Selectman Look. "There have been altogether too many slurs about me in this town! I want 'em stopped!"

"Allow me to notify callers, kindly, but firmly," warned the selectman, "that I am now here in the town office, tending strictly to town business. I have another office over Boadway's store for personal business and fights. Please note mottoes on the wall and act accordingly."

The mottoes were on cardboard and were freshly painted. The cap'n gave them the once over with glowering gaze.

One heralded: "Efficiency Our Watchword;" others: "Business With A Big B," "A New Broom Leaves No Dust In The Corners," "Get To It And Get Out," "This Town For Taxpayers."

"All meaning," commented Hiram, "that at last we are having a real and regular, up-to-date administration in this town."

"Any hint in that that I didn't tend to business when I was first selectman?" inquired the cap'n balefully.

"Every conscience is its own accuser," stated Mr. Look with bland dignity. "It doesn't make any difference to me what others have done. I'm going ahead and do for myself and in my own way, and I shall hew to the line. All useless expenses lopped off and brains used exclusively in management of all affairs."

Three times the timid knock had sounded on the door while the rather noisy dialogue had been going on. Selectman Look strode across the room and twitched the door open with impatience.

"This is a public office. All business transacted in the open. Walk in," he cried.

The Widow Zillah Blake was revealed in her faded garb of black, and Selectman Look was obliged to command three times with some sharpness before she ventured to enter.

"Out with it, Widow Blake," he said brusquely. "What can I do for you?"

The door was open behind her and the three men were staring. The poor woman trembled and was silent.

"Well! Speak up, marm!" advised Hiram.

"They told me you were in here, Mr. Flanders, and so I came," faltered the woman. "Excuse me for following you, but I'm nigh distracted. The constable says you sent him."

"I had to send him, Mis' Blake," said Flanders coldly. "You haven't even paid interest, much less principal, and things can't be left to run to loose ends like that in business matters."

"But he has brought men and they are taking away my furniture."

"When you give a business man a bill of sale of your furniture and don't pay up, not even your interest, you can't expect anything but foreclosure, marm. Take business and the law—they have to move so and so or else there ain't any stability left in matters."

The widow cast piteous gaze on Selectman Look.

"If my furniture is taken away from me, I shall have to call on the town, sir. I don't see any other way out for me. I haven't any relations to ask for help."

"I'm afraid I'll have to talk to you as a town officer who is organizing the business of the town on a new and im-

proved basis," said the selectman. "As a man who knows you have had a hard time of it since your husband died, I hate to say what I've got to say. But you can see by these mottoes that a new deal is on. I have set out to put the business of this town into modern and up-to-date shape, and whilst I'm in this office here, transacting town matters, I have to talk for the town and the taxpayers. In the past, the town has been giving aid to those who have called on it and has been allowing them to live on at their homes. That's a wasteful way of doing business. We are going to reopen the poorhouse and put in Caleb Place and his wife to run it, and all those who call for help will have to go there and be handled by system and rule. Economy is the watchword after this."

"It's a terrible cross to bear—going onto the town," whimpered the woman.

"Haden't you rather be on the town, knowing that it's a regular business deal, than fubbing along the way you have been doing? You'll only be acting out as the law provides—and of course you don't want to be a law-breaker."

She twisted her hands helplessly and gazed at the floor.

"You trot back to where you have been living and do the best you can till I can act officially. I think Caleb and his wife will have the poorhouse in some sort of shape by to-morrow. I'll send a team for you. I'll have to ask you to step along, marm," he insisted, taking her by the arm and leading her to the door. "It's a busy day with me."

So the widow departed.

"I want to say, as a taxpayer, that this town has now got a man at the head who will put some system and ginger into our business," declared Mr. Flanders with admiration glistening in his little eyes. "It has been costing us for pauper bills twice what it ought to cost. Your system was never approved

by the voters, Cap'n Sproul, and I'm bold to say it now right to your face."

"That's right—you'd better keep your face this way," agreed the cap'n. "I won't answer for myself if you give me a chance behind your back. I'm finding it hard work to keep my right foot on the floor." He turned on Hiram. "Is that your idea of enterprise, to go ramming such old critters as that widder onto the poor farm?"

"What does the law say on that point?"

"I don't care what the law says. It says a lot when some hoot-owl lawyer undertakes to talk for it. I'm talking about decency."

"And I'm talking about business common sense. We need a new fire engine, and right out of the pauper expenses alone, I'm going to save enough money to pay for one inside of a year."

"This town will be damnation proud of anything that's bought with that kind of money," growled the cap'n. "I want to say to you two men that some ways of getting money are a shame and a disgrace. Hiram Look, you have bragged to me how you grabbed off some of the cash you own to-day. It was by circus fakes and shenanigan in the show business. And I know how you have rooted your money up out of the muck, Bart Flanders. You grin, do you? Proud of your system, hey?"

"I've got it, and it's mine, and if that ain't what a man is on earth for, then I miss my guess," stated Mr. Flanders. "And if anybody can get it away from me, he's welcome to it. That's what I say."

"Is that your real say-so on the subject?"

"Yes, sir, it is! If folks are fools enough to drop their money after once they get their claws on it, that's their own fault. They haven't any right to come whining around like folks do to me, slurring me because I have seen the main chance and taken it."

"Just allow me to say that Mr. Flanders is right," put in Selectman Look. "When I started out, everybody was trying to do me, and I turned around and tucked it to them. And I know how to hang onto what I've got. I say with Flanders that all anybody can get away from me will go with my blessing. I wish other folks would adopt the same principle. There'd be less whining from paupers and about paupers. The world ain't called on to furnish gardeens for all the fools. And furthermore, Cap'n Sproul, seeing that you are no longer in town office, you ain't called on to act as gardeeen either for me or for the paupers. I'll handle 'em myself according to the best business principles. Anything else I can do for you?"

"Not a thing—not right now," returned the cap'n briskly. "I've got all I can chew on for the present. I'll take it away and chew on it."

He went back to his office and sat down at his desk and pondered.

"Did you find out what he has been saying behind your back?" asked the squire.

"Come to think of it, I didn't. What he said to my face took my mind off'n my main errunt. I have just been listening to some fresh ideas on how to run a town. I have also got new light on how to get along in the world. It is to grab off everything you can get hold of and then sit down on it and thumb your nose and dare folks to get it away from you. That's according to Hiram Look—that's according to Bart Flanders——"

"It's the code adopted by a number of other men in this town, sir. In this law office I have had a chance to watch their operations. For instance, Flanders came forward with a sort of trick accommodation note after Ezra Blake died and twisted out of the widow practically all of the little estate—only about eight hundred dollars, but all she had.

Ez Blake never owed that money—but she was unprotected and Flanders saw his chance."

"Now he has just taken her furniture on a bill of sale. By gad, Sones, that's meaner than a hen hawk! He may grab off a chicken, but he won't come back after the scattered feathers."

"I warned her not to borrow money from him. But my advice doesn't seem to be considered worth much in this town," said the squire with a sigh. "Folks mind it about as much as the village cats mind Eli's bark."

"Stealing from a widder—it's—it's ——" struggled the cap'n, seeking language.

"It's hardly worse than stealing from a blind man, cap'n. There's poor Billy Bowles. Flanders got power of attorney from Billy, and now Billy canes chair seats and is helped by the town."

"Billy and all the rest are going to be well taken care of from now on. Nothing more to worry about for them!" stated Cap'n Sproul, with scorn in his tones and a wrinkle of disgust on his nose. "Hime Look, being the best selectman this town ever had, is going to reopen the poorhouse and put the paupers on a strict business basis. He just told me so."

"That is shameful cruelty!" cried Squire Sones, promptly astonished and indignant. "The poor folks in this town are not ordinary paupers. They stood well in the world till old age or sickness or our local robbers got at 'em. There ought to be enough decent people in this town to wait on Hiram Look and make protest."

"All they'll get is a look at that new plug hat and a chance to read his new mottoes," stated the cap'n with conviction. "When he gets started on a tack, common sense, argument, and appeal to decency and reason have about as much effect on him as the snap of a schoolmarm's finger on a ring-tailed



With trembling fingers and with joy in his face, Flanders obeyed and handled the crisp money.

typhoon. You know him as well as I do!"

"I'm afraid you're right," confessed the squire, after a moment of silence.

"Do you know what I'd do? I'd support those old critters out of my own pocket," declared the cap'n stoutly, "if he'd let me do it—and they could stay at home. They don't eat no more'n sparrers—any of 'em. But now that he is running things as selectman, he'd have me in jail for interfering with a town officer before I'd be allowed to mix in. That's the style of man he is."

"No doubt of it, sir."

"He is all swelled up with his importance just now. Thinks he's at least ten miles tall and is called on to bite every coin and shave every bill of expense in behalf of the taxpayers of this town. I know what that feeling is. I had it once, myself, till I came to all of a sudden and realized that the taxpayers weren't sitting up nights worrying."

"Poor old folks!" mourned the squire. "Taking town aid at home—that has been misery. But this poorhouse plan—it's tragedy."

Cap'n Sproul seemed to be callously indifferent to the poorhouse topic just then. He interlocked his fingers and leaned back and nested his head in his hands and looked up at the ceiling.

Squire Somes was not a little surprised at the irrelevancy of the cap'n's further remarks.

"I reckon ye never set eyes on a waterspout in the Indian Ocean, squire! No, I reckoned not. You have squatted on shore all your life. I have seen quite a number of 'em. They look mighty savage and they make a devil of a lot of noise and they slosh things up tremendous. I remember one in especial! It was aiming straight for the *Jefferson P. Benn*. It was an awful pompous-acting thing—coming across the ocean, stamping along—and it had a black

cloud on top that looked a good deal like a plug hat. Seemed like there wasn't any show for anything that got in its way. First mate—talking to me about as you're talking now—seemed to be all discouraged; reckoned that there wasn't any stopping the thing. But I ran down into the cabin and grabbed a double-barreled gun and got back onto the quarter-deck just about the time Old Whizdoodle was clost aboard, and I let fire both barrels into it. Nothing more to it! It was only wind and water, anyway. It only needed a mite of a wallop to make it lie down and shut up."

"That is interesting. But I can't seem to think of much else except the poor folks—and this poorhouse business," ventured the squire.

"That's all I'm thinking about."

"But talking about the Indian Ocean—and waterspouts——"

The cap'n shifted gaze from the ceiling to the squire's puzzled countenance.

"Doesn't sound to you like there's any connection, hey?"

"No."

"Well, that shows that even a lawyer can't see through everything," was the cap'n's cryptic rejoinder. He put on his hat and walked out. "Perhaps I don't see through it, myself, well enough to talk about it just now," he muttered while going downstairs. "But we'll see what prayer and meditation can do—starting from the idea that after money has been stolen, the thieves haven't any kick if it's stolen back again."

He went out of his way a bit, not taking the direct route from the office to his home.

He saw men loading a jigger wagon with furniture from the Widow Blake's rented rooms.

He saw blind Billy Bowles in the yard belonging to a little one-room shop in which charity allowed him to dwell. There was a wire stretched from the door of the shop to the chicken coop,

another wire led to the pump, and still another led to the front gate. The blind man, whistling cheerily, was seeking his chickens with a pan of feed.

Farther on Arno Flanders came to the roadside, holding forth a paper in a hand that was twisted hideously by rheumatism.

"It says here that I can't go to mother's grave, Cap'n Sproul. It's a law paper from my brother."

"I'm sorry you're a cripple, Uncle Arno," said the cap'n. "If you were A1 and able, I should advise you to take a club in each hand and march acrost lots to that graveyard. Under the circumstances, you just hold on a spell. Something is li'ble to happen in this town."

He trudged on.

"It's a good idea to mix in a few sights like this with prayer and meditation," he informed himself. "It makes the batter stiffer."

That evening Cap'n Sproul was poor company in his home, and his wife asked with anxiety if he were in trouble.

"No, Louada Murilla, I am merely reorganizing my business ideas so as to be more modern and up to date. I'll have to ask you to keep busy with your tatting and let me meditate."

The next day the cap'n set a little sign on his desk; it announced, "Out. Will Return."

"Tell inquiring friends that this 'out' means out of town," he advised the squire. "And I don't know when I'm going to get back."

"I'm sorry you're going away just now," said Squire Somes wistfully. "I was hoping that— Well, under the distressing circumstances, I had sort of hoped you'd see some way of preventing Hiram Look from carrying out that cruel plan."

Then Cap'n Sproul displayed more of that callous indifference that had astonished the squire the day before.

"It ain't any pleasure for me, hanging around here these times. Too much trouble in the air. I'm going where I can get relaxation. Fun and laughing and jollity while you can enjoy same—that's my motto." He went away, humming:

"Oh, I will go to Baltimore,
To dance upon that sanded floor!
Johnny, get your hair cut pompa-dore!
Johnny's gone to Hilo!"

Squire Somes looked at the door for a time after the cap'n had slammed it behind himself, and then he stared down into the wondering eyes of his old dog.

"I don't blame you for being surprised, Eli. I am myself. There's a man I counted on. But all at once, when the test comes and after a little bluster, he changes all over. I suppose he is like all the rest—afraid for his pocketbook. I wish we had more money of our own, Eli. I guess we're the only ones in town to be depended on—now that Cap'n Sproul has changed."

The cap'n was even more changed when he came back to Scotaze a few days later. The most notable evidence of that change was shown when he met Bart Flanders and grinned into the scowl of the usurer.

"Well, out with it," growled the local Shylock. "Have you thought up some new way to hout me?"

"Not by a blame sight!" cried the cap'n with great good humor. "I am taking back what I said to you. I believe you were right."

"And for me, I don't believe one cussed word you say," returned Flanders, suspicion in his little eyes.

"I tell you, I have been going over the thing as one of the large taxpayers, and I have got to uphold men like you and Hiram Look, who are trying to save money for the town."

"It doesn't sound natural. It ain't your style to back down even when

you're wrong. I don't believe you, I say again."

"Look-a-here, Flanders, you know it ain't safe in this town for any man to tell me that I lie. How would you naturally expect me to feel as a taxpayer?"

"Well, a taxpayer with common sense—like I took you to be when I spoke to you about getting a real lawyer into this town—would back up Selectman Look and would stand in with capital instead of with folks who don't pay their bills."

"Exactly. That's me at present writing, after realizing that I went off halfcocked the other day. But you must understand that going to sea for so many years has made me different from folks on shore."

"I'm willing to make allowances, but when you call me a chum of Cain and something that a shark—"

"Flanders, there's one good way for a man to show another man that he is sorry for past remarks. That's to take said man off for a good time and pay the bills and get better acquainted. Let's me and you chum round together for a little while, and you'll see that I mean what I say. That's the only way to find out."

Mr. Flanders blinked, still suspicious, but manifestly weakening.

"The hoss trot opens to-day down to the shire. Come along with me. Hop on the train and I'll pay fares, all bills, giving you a bang-up dinner at the tavern, and we'll talk the whole thing over in a brotherly way."

A day's outing with all expenses paid appealed to the thrift of Mr. Flanders.

"I don't see where I stand to lose anything," he admitted, after pondering.

"You can't lose," affirmed the cap'n.

"Furthermore, I've got about four hundred dollars to deposit in the county savings bank and a few other little things to tend to. All right! I'll go.



"That's gold, boys. Real gold. A gold brick!"

If you want to fool your money away on hoss trots, it's none of my business, and this may teach you to use me better after this."

"Just so," agreed the cap'n. "I'm willing to fine myself for past offenses."

Squire Somes saw them ride out of the village together, on their way to the railroad station, and he was more than ever depressed by this apparent defection of one whom he had looked upon as his chief ally. He saw other folks ride out of the village that day; they were the rest of the old folks who were bound for the poorhouse over the hill.

Cap'n Sproul did not allow Mr. Flanders to attend to errands when they arrived at the shire town.

"We are down here for fun and rollicking," he insisted, "and I'm paying the bills. Stick that money down where the pickpockets can't get at it and come along to the hoss trot."

Mr. Flanders did not hang back; it was a new experience, going along with a man who insisted on paying all the bills and who seemed to find delight in doing so. Every time Cap'n Sproul pulled out his wallet, the heart of the skinflint glowed.

"I reckon you'd like to see all the sights and side shows before we go

onto the grand stand," suggested the host. "I'll take you into every one. I'm not the kind that goes halfway when I'm out to spend money."

Therefore, Mr. Flanders, with a constantly increasing appreciation of the cap'n's unstinted generosity, began an outing such as he had never before enjoyed. He saw the petrified Mormon giant, the hootchie-cootchie girls, the wild man who gnawed on a bone and howled and had to be restrained every few minutes with a pitchfork, the Peruvian cockatoo, the two-legged horse, and he tried his hand at various games of ring tossing, archery, and air-rifle marksmanship.

"This is costing you an awful lot of money, cap'n," he kept protesting. "When money is being spent, I always think of how a man is handing away something that can be working for him while he's asleep. I'm strong on interest."

"So am I," confessed the cap'n. "How much do you and Hiram manage to get when you lend money?"

Mr. Flanders blinked at his questioner, showing suspicion.

"I suppose I'm asking a sassy question, but if there's enough in it, I might let you have a little loose money to handle for me," explained the cap'n blandly. "But you needn't say if you don't want to."

"I'm willing to let in any friend of mine on a good lay," blurted the usurer. "Of course, we have to be careful on account of what the law says is the legal rate, but when a man or woman has got to have money—and them's the customers I hunt for—then, by lending on short terms, renewing loans often, making new papers, and et cetera, we clean up fifteen per cent. Considering fuss and worry, that ain't extravagant interest. And every now and then, by watching the chance for a foreclosure, we turn a trick where we double money. Mr. Look only puts in his money. I tend to all the details. I know my business."

"You seem to," assented the cap'n. "We'll probably get down to doing business after we get home."

"I hate to see you throwing away as much money as you're spending to-day."

They were in a tent where a loud-voiced man was offering certain opportunities to "anybody with sporting blood." He brandished a fat wad of money in one hand and in the other held sticks of candy. He laid the money down on the stand in front of him and began to wrap the candy in bits of paper. Every now and then he picked up a five or ten or even twenty-dollar bill and wrapped it around the candy along with the bit of paper.

"We don't care how far we go in advertising this candy," he proclaimed. "Bill," says the president of our company to me when I starts out from

our million-dollar factory the other day, 'we want this candy et in every city and village and hamlet in this broad and free country,' says he. 'We propose to have it et there. Throw money as loose as ashes so as to advertise it. Get 'em to talking about it!' Here's a twenty-dollar bill. In she goes! It ain't my money. It comes from the firm. I'm ordered to give it away. I don't care who gets it."

"When it comes to luck in them things, I'm quite a dabster," volunteered the cap'n slyly in Mr. Flanders' ear.

"It doesn't stand to reason that they're giving money away like that," demurred Scotaze's Shylock. "Nobody gives away money like that. It hurts me to see him handle money so careless—crumpling it all up."

"And it has hurt you to see me spending as much money as I have to-day," said the cap'n. "Now, mebbe I can relieve your feelings. Mebbe I can step up there and get back in one whack all the money I have spent to date. I'm going to try it."

With Mr. Flanders at his heels, he stepped forward.

"Here seems to be an intelligent and enterprising gent," stated the barker. "Always glad to do business with such a gent. What say?"

"How much a stick?" asked the cap'n.

"Ten cents—only a nominal price of ten cents in this great advertising campaign."

The cap'n purchased and unrolled the stick that he selected from the agent's hand. He pulled out a yellow-backed twenty-dollar bill.

"Some are born lucky," said the barker. "That's good interest on a small investment, gents."

"I hope your feelings are now relieved," said the cap'n to his companion. "I have got back all the money I spent, and more, too."

"I reckon I'll buy a stick," declared Mr. Flanders. "He seems to be a reckless critter with his money."

"Don't you do it," protested the cap'n.

"But it's only ten cents—and I ain't spent anything to-day."

"I tell ye not to do it. You ain't as much of a dabster as I am. Here, chap up there, I'll have another stick."

"Always ready to accommodate, mister. Help yourself."

That time Cap'n Sproul was not so fortunate; he secured only five dollars. But Mr. Flanders' eyes gleamed lustfully.

"Never saw no such chance to make money easy," he gasped. "Beats the Dutch! But I reckon them big concerns in these days don't care how they cut and slash."

"Probably not," agreed the cap'n. "Here, man up there, I'll buy your whole handful you've got wrapped."

"That ain't the way we care to advertise," stated the agent. "That don't mean proper distribution. You'd only be swapping pennies for a sure make of a hundred times more'n you invested."

The cap'n looked disappointed.

"I ain't any piker, hunting for sure money," he protested. "If it comes to speculating, I'm willing to meet you halfway."

The man on the stand beamed.

"Now you're biting off real language, a whole mouthful at a time!" he cried. "Bill," says our president to me as I was starting away, 'Bill,' he says, 'if you find a gent with sporting blood in him, show him that our company is ready and willing to meet him halfway. Show him that he ain't doing business with pikers. Meet his propositions, even if it means that we have to mortgage our plant!'"

He was wrapping more candy as rapidly as his fingers could work, and Mr. Flanders suffed moisture in the

corners of his mouth as he saw the bills go into the papers with as little respect as would be shown to autumn leaves.

"A hundred dollars for that mess you've got wrapped," offered the cap'n.

The agent tossed the candy into a box where there were numerous other packages of sweets.

"We'll make it five dollars a draw," he said, shaking up the contents of the box. "Of course, no gent with sporting blood expects a sure thing in this world."

Cap'n Sproul offered no protest. He drew rapidly and passed the sticks one by one to Mr. Flanders.

"Unwrap and count for me while I draw," he commanded.

With trembling fingers and with joy in his face, Flanders obeyed and handled the crisp money.

"Two hundred and sixty dollars! A hundred and sixty profit!" he reported gustfully.

"Beats interest even at the rate you figure it in Scotaze, eh?" chuckled the cap'n.

"You're claiming to be a friend of mine. I don't take it kind of you if you keep hogging this thing," protested Flanders. His face was flushed and there was an ugly rasp in his tones.

"I warn you——"

"I don't need any guardeen in running my business so as to make money. I have always made money and I always can!"

"Remember that I have warned you!"

"You shut up!" snarled Mr. Flanders, thoroughly angry and avid for gain. "I've got as much right as you have. I'll take two chances," he informed the agent, unwrapping his wallet and producing a ten-dollar bill.

Mr. Flanders pulled a twenty-dollar bill from each package of candy.

"I'll show ye that you ain't the only dabster!" he told the cap'n with triumph.

He shoved up one hundred dollars.

He plunged his hand into the box. According to his best judgment, the man on the stand had been throwing in money with special recklessness. But Mr. Flanders was much surprised to find himself utterly "skunked" in that next foray.

"Now that will teach you to mind me next time," said the cap'n reproachfully.

"Always look for money where you left it," advised the agent blandly.

"That's my motto," declared Flanders with desperate vigor.

His eyes gleamed. That loss had made him frantic and reckless. He plunged. Ten minutes later, he had a fine assortment of candy and paper wrappers in return for an investment of four hundred dollars.

"Lend me some money," he gasped, turning his purple face to Cap'n Sproul. "He is shoving plenty into that box. It has got to come out."

"I won't lend you a cent. I don't believe in aiding and condoning any such foolishness."

"But I can't go away now and leave all this money! I'd never have another good night's rest! I've got to go after it! It's four hundred dollars. It will almost earn me day's wages."

"We're still doing business at the old stand," said the genial agent.

"And I'll be back here in a little while to do business with you," shouted Flanders. "There's a bank in this town where I can get money, even if friends go back on me!"

"Here's your ticket for a seat on the grand stand. You can find me there when you get through your foolishness," Cap'n Sproul informed his companion. "I'm down here to see a hoss trot, not to waste time this way."

After Mr. Flanders had rushed out, the cap'n bestowed benevolent and appreciative gaze on the agent.

"Them that recommended you to me as a slick crook knew their business."

"Glad you have nothing to complain of."

"Is the other critter just as tricky?"

"More so, if anything."

"Thanks. See you before I leave town."

An hour or so later, Mr. Flanders came to Cap'n Sproul on the grand stand.

"Twelve hundred dollars! Twelve hundred lost and gone!" he gasped. His thin face was gray with anguish. "My Gawd, what got into me? I never done it before! It's going to kill me!"

"I warned you. Now I'll go see that man and mebbe something can be done. You stay here," directed the cap'n.

The candy man was waiting in the tent.

"Here's twelve hundred, less ten per cent commission," he informed the cap'n in brisk tones. "Hope all is satisfactory. If you ever need a regular job as capper for my game, apply to me. You're a good one."

"Thanks," said Cap'n Sproul, tucking away the money. "Now you skip in a hurry."

The emissary shook his head mournfully when he came in range of Mr. Flanders' hungry gaze.

"Before we had swapped a dozen words, he up and run away, Flanders. He's a bad one. But you'll remember I warned ye!"

"I'll chase him and have him arrested!"

"If you complain, they'll arrest you, too, for gambling. You'd better come home with me, Flanders. You ain't fit to be trusted out alone."

On the way back to Scotaze, Flanders was such a poor companion that Cap'n Sproul had plenty of time for self-communing.

"I haven't got much taste for this kind of game," he told himself. "But according to their own proclamation, it's the only game they're willing to play, and I'll keep on with it. Let's



Mr. Look exhibited both distress and anger. "Lead for a filling isn't any good," stated the cap'n.

see! I have got the widder's eight hundred dollars for her, and a little spare change for his brother Arno. We ought to do still better on the next deal if the cards come right."

Two days later an elderly and rather distinguished-looking gentleman arrived in Scotaze, and he was received with great cordiality by Selectman Hiram Look and was introduced by Mr. Look to a few of that gentleman's chosen intimates in the town. It became known that Mr. Pitkin Peables had formerly been rather close to Mr. Look when he had been in the show business.

Mr. Peables remained in town for several days and his general suavity and fund of stories made him very popular.

On the third day, Mr. Look called a special and private meeting at his office over Boadway's store. In the party were Mr. Flanders, Barnett Titus,

and three other moneyed men of Scotaze. Also, Mr. Peables was present.

"I'll make it short and sweet and to the point, boys," stated Chairman Look. "Just feast your eyes on this!"

He unwrapped a parcel and displayed a chunk of yellow metal.

"That's gold, boys. Real gold. A gold brick!"

"Yes, we have heard of 'em," growled Mr. Flanders, looking at the object with the disfavor one might show toward a viper.

"But this isn't the kind of gold brick you're thinking of," explained Hiram. "I'll admit that it has been used to play the game with. The game is always played with a real gold brick, you understand. Only, the hick doesn't get the real brick. Here's an opportunity for us to get the real one."

"That's what they all think," snarled the irreconcilable Mr. Flanders: "I

want to say that I consider this is a slur on our intelligence—this gold-bricking us!"

"Look here, you don't think I'd be party to a flimflam—me, the selectman of this town, do you?" demanded Hiram with heat.

"There ain't any telling who to trust these days," insisted Flanders.

"I'll talk to those who have a little glimmering of common sense left," proceeded Mr. Look. "The idea is, boys, the gold-brick game has played out forever in this country. Probably this is the last of all the game gold bricks that's left in the United States. Just how my friend Peables got hold of it is no matter. On account of reasons of his own, he isn't in a position to dispose of it in the market. He thinks I can handle it without anybody asking foolish questions. I can. But I'm willing to give my friends a look-in on the make."

He turned to Collins Twitchell, the village jeweler, who had been invited to the conference.

"Take that down to the shop, Collins, and bring back a report on it."

The jeweler obeyed and in due course of time returned.

"It's worth rising ten thousand dollars, gents," he declared. "And it's real gold!"

"All right! My friend Peables says that under the circumstances, being well acquainted with me, not wanting to bother any more with it, understanding that it's no more use in the game that has played out, he'll sell it for six thousand dollars—and that's a thousand from each one of us."

"I don't propose to be gold-bricked! I've been——" But Mr. Flanders checked himself at that point.

"Very well! Nobody is being coaxed in this thing. I'll take two shares," stated Selectman Look. "What say the rest of you gents?"

After a few moments devoted to deliberation, the others decided to come in—and Mr. Flanders followed on their heels. It occurred to him that the proposition, sponsored by Hiram Look, was probably all right, and that he might be able to make up some of his distressing loss in the candy game.

Mr. Peables was especially amiable and unctuous when he rose to thank the gentlemen of the new syndicate. He expressed his pleasure at being able to turn a good thing in their direction and, after he had carefully rewrapped and sealed his gold brick, he agreed to meet them that evening to turn over the property and receive the cash.

"This is a case where I, personally, vouch for a square deal," announced Selectman Look. "I know Peables. He's all right. I haven't been in the circus business the most of my life not to know all the tricks of the trade. But in this little special business that we have on right now, we don't have to look out for tricks."

And because Mr. Look was not looking, something happened.

He did not know exactly how it had happened—but from his general knowledge of methods he could guess. He had allowed the personality and the protestations of Mr. Peables to disarm suspicion. He would have watched another man in the smallest details and with most minute scrutiny. But somehow, in this instance, it had happened!

The gold brick had been confided to the custody of Selectman Look to be placed in the town-office safe. When he inspected the treasure in private on the morning after, he found a chunk of lead.

Ten minutes after that horrible discovery, Cap'n Aaron Sproul dropped in on the agonized selectman of Scotaze.

"Toothache?" asked the cap'n with solicitude.

"Yes," stammered Hiram, trying to hide his woe.

"Why don't you have it filled with gold?"

Hiram blinked nervously at sound of the last word.

"I say, why don't you try a gold filling?"

Mr. Look exhibited both distress and anger.

"Lead for a filling isn't any good," stated the cap'n.

Hiram leaped to his feet, planted both hands on the table, and stared at Cap'n Sproul.

"I've got plenty of gold here in my pocket. I'll lend you a hunk," proffered the cap'n, tapping a protuberance that sagged mightily.

"Do you mean to say——"

"That's what I do mean. I hired the best gold-bricker in the business to come down here and sail a course according to the charts you and Bart Flanders spread out before me a while ago. What you or anybody can get away from us you're welcome to, says you and he. So I went ahead, and now that I have had a little practice, I reckon I'll keep on."

"Gawd-a-mighty!" roared Hiram, pounding the table. "Have I been gold-bricked? Me that knows the game all the way from the maintop to the peanut concession? That worked on me? Me, the last man in the world to be gold-bricked?"

"Looks like it," stated the cap'n with serenity. "Shows what can be done! I ain't sure what I'll do to you and them other critters next."

"If you have that brick in your pocket, hand it over! It's mine!"

"No, it isn't. I bought it before you did—only I got the real goods."

"Where is our money?"

"I have it, Selectman Look. That gold-bricker was working for me strictly on commission. He's a reliable gold-bricker. Now sit down and stop your swearing! Mr. Look," he proceeded, "there are now two ways open

to you! You can show up yourself and that hunk of lead—and what will happen to you in this town needn't be dwelt on. Also, it will be a nice ad for you among circus folks that you have been gold-bricked at your age. I can hear 'em laughing."

Hiram cringed and sank lower in his chair.

"Or"—the cap'n dwelt on the word—"or you can do what I tell you to do."

"What is it?"

"Put those poor old folks back into their little homes where they belong, and run town business after this as if you had a heart in you instead of a gizzard full of stones. If you don't agree to that, I'll walk out, and if you can explain that hunk of lead to your gang, you'll be doing better than the Apostle Paul could if he should try to make 'em believe the story."

"But where do I stand as it is?"

"You stand just this way," stated the cap'n, tapping blunt finger tip on the table. "You're going to hand back the money to your fellow pirates and tell 'em that Peables squealed later on the trade—or tell 'em any story you're a mind to. You're a better liar than I am. You're going to pay me expenses of the game to date. That's to make you understand that you'd better not do anything after this to start me out again. I can make it expensive for you. And you and I are going to chip in five hundred dollars apiece to buy a few little extra comforts for the poor folks after they get back to their homes. That's all to date."

"I'll have to do it, I reckon," lamented Hiram, "seeing how you have got me tied up. But it seems to me that you and I are the principal ones who are digging up."

"No," stated Cap'n Sproul dryly. "I have already tended to the case of Bart Flanders, and now that I am in practice, I'll look after the others. As near as I can find out, I'm a dabster at it!"



They were putting her wardrobe in order for her and doing her packing.

The Chooser

By Evelyn Gill Klahr

Author of "A Foothold for Two," "The Queen's Hat," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

In which Laura Bascom decides to exchange her chosen fiance for the whole world and for her freedom, and then Love comes along and chooses her.

LITTLE Laura Bascom was afraid. In all her eighteen years, she had never known fear before; never, diving from the highest board or swimming in the swiftest current, had the finger of fear ever touched her. After her arm had been broken in basket ball, she had played quite as fearlessly as she had ever done. That very afternoon, with all the town looking on, she had matched her tennis skill serenely and confidently against that of Grant Hallowell, in spite of his collegiate championship. And never the finger of fear until now, when, for no reason at all, it gripped her cruelly. She was afraid to move or breathe.

And there was no reason for it, nor did she know of what she was afraid. Indoors, they were dancing while Nellie Hastings played for them on the piano; indoors, just a few yards away

from her very hand, were her own crowd, laughing and chattering and dancing.

It was dark out there on the veranda, except for the stream of light that flowed from the half-open shutters across her lap. She played her hands in it as if it were a stream of water, and tried to think of nothing except how white her hands were, and how black the shadow they made upon her dress. It was useless to try to think of anything to say to the man sitting on the porch swing beside her, for the very effort only increased her fear. And that was silly, for all day long there had never been any one so kind as he. He had congratulated her on her tennis; he had congratulated her on her swimming; and he had kept saying the funniest, jolliest things. It was flattering, too, to be picked out from

all the girls by Grant Hallowell, tennis champion, long-distance swimmer, honor man of his class at college, most admired by the men as well as the girls of the town.

Now he wasn't saying a word. Now he was just sitting there in the swing beside her and breathing too hard. She didn't like the way he was breathing too hard. She was afraid.

Suddenly it happened, and in her terrified consciousness she knew this must have been the thing that she had been fearing. His arms about her, crushing her, hurting her, his lips crushed to her own, terrified her almost to suffocation. But what frightened her even more was the wild, panic-stricken joy in her own heart. She didn't like it. Kisses weren't like that, and nice girls didn't feel a wild, panic-stricken joy when they were kissed.

She felt very, very weak all over, and it was hard to breathe.

People came out on the veranda just then, people laughing—she scarcely knew who they were. She scarcely knew how they all got back into the room together. She danced with every one but Grant Hallowell.

Some one told her—she did not know who—that Grant Hallowell was starting the very next day on his trip to Africa for that research work with herbs—very risky to his own health, they told her, but of the greatest importance to science. She was immensely relieved that he was going.

At the end of the evening, he shook hands and said good-by to every one. He shook hands and said good-by to her, and they got it over with as quickly as possible.

And that was all there was to the memory from which Laura Bascom could not escape. It was more than a memory; it was the actual recurrence of the sensations—her own fear, the crush of his arms, the terrifying pressure of his lips.

Things all happened at once, as they always do, for that very summer was the summer of her father's remarriage.

From the first, she liked the little stepmother and her two nice daughters. They were affectionate, petting, confiding women, and they would have been so glad to pet her and welcome her confidences. But she couldn't, she couldn't let them pet her and fuss over her, and she couldn't tell them one thing that was in her heart. Had she been able to do it, that memory might have stepped back from its intrusive prominence and taken its place decently among other memories.

As it was, she couldn't tell when it would trouble her. It might come in church when the minister was preaching on the life of Job, or when she was curled up on the couch of some one's room at boarding school and all the girls were talking about their favorite cold cream or the next day's algebra lesson. It might come even then; you couldn't tell.

Queerly, it reconciled her to the lack of eligible young men in Darford, when the men of her own crowd had all married or migrated cityward. She liked swimming, she liked tennis, she liked basket ball, she liked canoeing on the river, she adored her long tramps in the woods above the river; but she felt she could get along quite satisfactorily and perfectly without young male society.

Then suddenly she changed her mind; it seemed as if she couldn't get along quite satisfactorily and perfectly.

It happened on the day when she was getting ready for a trip to Cambridge Springs with an aunt, or, rather, the other two girls were getting her ready. Wistfully envious, but ever generous, they were putting her wardrobe in order for her and doing her packing. They pressed out all her thin dresses for her, because Laura had a hopeless tendency to scorch fragile fab-

rics; they mended and mated her draw-
erful of half-worn silk stockings; their
instinctively accurate hands knew how
to sew a collar in place without the
endless measuring so necessary for
Laura, and just how to make a bow for
a boudoir cap, and how to plait lace
with the electric iron.

As they worked, their minds re-
verted continually to Cambridge
Springs.

"You ought to meet some interesting
men there," sighed the elder stepsister,

christened "Irene" by the minister and
rechristened "Pussy" by a doting
mother, just as she had rechristened
Clara, the younger, "Babe."

"That's the worst of Darford," said
Babe. "You might as well live in a
convent. Mind the fun we used to
have in Greenville?" she asked her sis-
ter, her memory returning longingly to
the town where they had lived before
her mother's second marriage. "Mind
those dances we used to have down
at the Joneses' when it was always the
men who were the wall-
flowers, because there were
so many more of them than
girls?"

"Maybe all the men at
Cambridge Springs will be
convalescent," she went on
to Laura, "but they'll be sure
to be interesting, anyhow."

"I don't care," said Laura
indignantly, "whether there's
a single man or not at Cam-
bridge Springs. I can get
along perfectly well without
them."

Pussy was wiser.

"We are young only
once," she said simply.

We are young only once.
The words stayed persist-
ently in Laura's conscious-
ness, and in time they per-
formed some strange al-
chemy in her blood.

For, after all, we
are young only once.
And youth is love
time, the only part
of life that counts;
the years that precede
it are only anticipa-
tory, the years that fol-
low only reminiscent.
So if one misses the
love time, Laura
mused, one misses all
of life. These were



Suddenly it happened, and in
her terrified consciousness she knew
this must have been the thing that she
had been fearing.

the thoughts that held her captive. Her own young days were slipping from her with no romance in them; unless, of course, one counted the brief moments of the memory, the memory she kept trying to escape. It was hard to miss it all—all the golden hours of caring utterly for some other human being and having that human being in return cherish you above all the world. And all the dear things one does for the other—was she to miss all of that? Was she to have only the left-overs of life, the gray, barren left-overs of life?

The determination she came to as the day wore on was almost a desperate reaching out for life itself:

"If I have a chance, I must take it."

The chance came as the sisters had prophesied, at Cambridge Springs, and she did not evade it. There was something almost supernatural about it, so it seemed to her; something that almost hinted of witchcraft. She had said the spell, "If I have the chance, I must take it," and the words had scarcely been spoken when, behold, the lover appeared.

They were sweet and dreamy, these days of love-making. And as for that memory, it was as if she had slammed the door upon its face and turned the key upon it.

Now and then, it is true, something happened to jolt her out of this sweet dreaminess, as, for instance, the discovery that he worried whenever they walked through the woods for fear his shoes were getting scuffed. Then, too, she discovered, in a novel taken from the hotel library, every one of his endearing names for her—"little rosebud," "sweetest lady," every one of them, word for word.

"The names didn't fit me, anyhow," she told herself.

She was helped over these disquieting times by her aunt, who said every now and then:

"My dear, that Archie Hilber is the *sweetest* boy!"

But, after all, she was really happier when she was back home and had his letters instead of his daily presence, because when she had been with him, there had been those moments of cruel, self-searching honesty when she had wondered and doubted herself.

But there was one thing she did not doubt—with love itself she was most surely in love; there could not be the least little doubt about that.

That stream of letters, of course, needed an explanation, and, very much embarrassed, she told her stepmother and stepsisters about Archie.

They were all glad for her, unquestionably glad, for here was life coming out right for one of them at least, no matter how it treated the others. The unselfish Pussy was almost buoyant about it, and her efficient hands were eager, hungry almost, to begin work on a trousseau. But in Babe's gladness there was a tinge of bitterness; never toward Laura—there was no room in her affectionate little heart for that—but toward life, which had treated her so badly.

The good little mother, as she went about conscientiously teaching Laura the art of home-making and cooking, wondered why girls like hers were left unmated, while the privilege of making a home was given to this dear, strong, outdoor person. Her own girls were just suited for marriage, one could see at a glance—homy, attractive girls, men's girls; but this dear, impossible Laura darned stockings as badly as she played tennis well, and half the time left the soda dissolved in water standing on the table instead of mixing it in her ginger bread.

But she went on conscientiously with her teaching, and Laura went on conscientiously with her learning. Frankly, she did not enjoy it. She would rather have dug a whole field of potatoes

than French fry a single dish of them. But she had chosen her life and she was going to stand by her choice.

Then everything happened at once, as things always do. Grant Hallowell selected this very time to arrive from Africa, where he had been doing big things that every one knows about, making discoveries, thrilling alike to physicians and chemists, and risking his own life.

Babe saw him first, and came home very excitedly to announce it.

"And good looking! My dears, you ought to see him! He's handsome, in that awfully nice, lean brown way. He'd be wonderful in a dress suit. Of course, he just had on hunting togs or something like that. He was going toward the woods. He's terribly good looking, really."

After that Babe or Pussy saw him nearly every day. And almost always he was going to or from the woods.

Laura did not see him at all, and, if the ghost of that memory began again to walk, she banished it sternly. Its presence seemed almost an insult to Archie. She had time only to think of him now, especially since his visit was so imminent.

She was touched at first by all the preparations for her lover's visit. It was dear of them to want to have everything nice for him. And then it struck her that the preparations were absurdly elaborate. She had manicured her own nails as she always did, and put up her hair in the usual way—though perhaps with more care—but her sisters had both gone downtown to have their nails and hair done by professional artists. She wondered what made them want to do it, and it made her realize how extremely different they were from herself.

This realization made her observe the other girls with a new interest during those days of Archie's visit. Pussy seemed to have developed a new cle-

verness. Her talk was fairly effervescent with a new wittiness. And Babe seemed infused with a new youthfulness, very sweet, very charming, very playful. Even Laura found that she loved to watch her sitting on the arm of her mother's chair or on the little low stool beside the fire, her pretty dimples alternating charmingly with her equally pretty poutings.

Archie was enchanted; he was enraptured by the charm of all of them.

That first Saturday afternoon, Laura had planned to go with him for a tramp through the woods above the river. But it was showery and damp and a little chilly, the sort of autumn day that sometimes obtrudes itself into the springtime. Archie frowned doubtfully at the weather.

"I don't mind the rain in the least," Laura assured him.

He shook his head over her with a tender concern.

"We don't want any little girls to catch cold," he told her.

A faint shudder came over her. She was not the sort of a person to whom one said things like that.

"I don't believe I'd go, honey," Pussy advised her. "It's awfully damp and chilly out."

"I don't see why you want to drag him 'way out there, anyhow," Babe put in, a little pettishly. "There's nothing to do 'way out there. And you could have a lot more fun here. You could build a wood fire in the living room, and toast marshmallows over it, and Pussy and I could make some fudge, and you could run the Victrola, and everything."

Laura submitted cheerfully.

"Very well," she acquiesced. "We'll stay here."

Almost from the very first, Laura recognized it as the worst afternoon of her life. It was hot indoors, with the wood fire conscientiously blazing away, and there was a sticky sweetness about



Archie was having a wonderful time and so was Babe.

the whole afternoon. There seemed to be a never-ending procession of those marshmallows, which Babe and Archie toasted over the fire, wrangling playfully over them, each snatching the other's just as it reached its final state of pale-brown toasted perfection.

They kept the Victrola going continually, singing songs about "love moons" and "summer moons" and "hold my hand a little closer;" songs in which Babe and Archie frequently joined, while Laura sat back in her armchair feeling for all the world like her own great-grandmother.

Archie was having a wonderful time and so was Babe; while Pussy and the little stepmother, whenever they came into the room, showed plainly by their manner that all this was exactly right; this was the way young folks ought to spend their afternoons.

"What is the matter with me, anyhow?" Laura demanded of her bored heart.

When Pussy went out to make the fudge, Babe went out to help her, quite obviously for the sake of leaving the

pair alone, for every one knew that Pussy didn't require any help with her fudge.

As soon as they were left together, conscientiously he leaned over and kissed her on her lips. Her own lips were cold and passive. For the life of her, she couldn't help it.

He noticed this and became troubled.

"You know," he assured her, "I'd just as soon go out for that walk if you want to."

"I don't want to go," she replied with cheerful promptness. "I'm sure it's a lot better to stay here."

This satisfied him.

He poked at the fire a little and seated himself on the floor at her feet and leaned his head against her knees. She had a vague feeling that he felt this was the proper thing to do, and she knew the proper thing for her to do was to stroke his hair. She forced herself to do it. But all the time, with a certain grim humor, she was aware of how stiffly reluctant were her unaccustomed fingers.

"Good heavens!" she told herself. "I can't do this sort of thing!"

Presently they heard Babe talking in the dining room beyond and realized that it was a signal of her imminent entrance. Archie got up nervously and started again to poke at the fire, and Laura felt infinitely relieved.

Pussy followed in a few moments bearing the plate of fudge, cut into warm, moist squares. Babe and Archie almost collided in their enthusiastic efforts to reach the plate first. And when Babe's nimbleness achieved it, Archie gave her a tiny pinch on her wrist to punish her for getting ahead of him.

"Awshum good!" announced Babe, smacking her lips over her bonbons.

Archie laughed delightedly as he helped himself to two more of the candies.

"Awshum good!" he repeated.

A shudder went over Laura, and she closed her eyes.

"What am I going to do?" she demanded of her heart.

The patient Victrola had been started again, and it was singing away about "love moons" and "summer moons" and "hold my hand a little closer." The air was close and heavy. How Laura longed for her walk through the woods and the cold, wet rain in her face!

Suddenly the memory of Grant Hallowell's kiss came back to her, and for once she did not shrink from it. She even contemplated it with interest; there seemed to be something big and strong and virile about it. She wondered if that had been love.

"Awshum good!" said Archie, and held out his hand for another candy.

Again the shudder went over Laura. She threatened in her heart:

"If any one says that again, I absolutely can't stand it! I shall get up and leave!"

As Babe's hand reached out again for

the plate of chocolate sweetness, Archie snatched it away and held it high above her head.

Babe pouted her pretty pout.

"Please!" she coaxed.

"What is it you want?" queried Archie, pretending he didn't know.

Babe coaxed with her pretty head on one side.

"Awshum good!" she lisped.

Abruptly Laura rose.

"I've got to do some errands," she told Archie. "Would you mind waiting until I come back?"

Archie rose at once.

"Couldn't I go with you?" he asked. But there was half-heartedness in his voice, a reluctance to leave his cozy seat by the fire with those two lovely girls.

"I'm awfully afraid you can't," she told him. "It's some place I couldn't very well take you. But I won't be gone long," she added, and knew that she lied.

Out of doors, she breathed in the fresh, damp air with an exciting sense of escape.

"I couldn't have stood it another moment!" she said aloud. "I absolutely could not!"

All afternoon she had been saying things in her heart that she dared not speak with her voice, and now it was a relief to announce them aloud to the unhearing universe.

"That sort of thing would kill me dead! I can't stand it, you know! I just can't!"

Oh, the good, solid ground under her feet! In her nostrils, the clean, sweet fragrance of the wet woods! Her nerves, worn out by their surfeiting of sweets and sentimentality, were refreshed and restored.

They were very dear and sweet, those stepsisters and her little stepmother, but they weren't her sort; nor was Archie, though he was dear, too, in exactly their way. There was no ques-



And then, as she turned, he held out a lean brown hand to greet her: "How do you do? This is awfully jolly, seeing you again after all these years."

tion in her mind what she should do, for already she had done it, and had done it with a joyous sense of escape. True, she had chosen, but—thank God!—it was not too late to revoke her choice. She was no longer troubled at the thought of missing her chance of life, for this cloying sweetness, while it might be life to the others, was not life to her.

Then a sudden thrilling thought came into her mind: If she was not going to marry, then her life was all her own to do with as she pleased—to do anything in the world that she pleased, anything in the whole, wide world that she pleased! Why had she been cling-

ing all this while to the petticoats of other folks' ideals? For hadn't she her own, which were her very own? There was no place in the world she couldn't go if she chose. Her stepsisters and their mother made a complete little circle, and, besides, now they could have Archie. In her mind, she presented Archie to them eagerly, almost forced him into their welcoming arms. She would exchange him for the whole world and for her freedom.

There were steps behind her, overtaking her along that woodland path. But she did not heed them, so absorbed was she in the choosing of her new life; and it must be real life, too, hard work

and hard play. She might have a ranch in the West, or try some Arctic explorations, or go over to the great war as a journalist or nurse.

The man behind her had overtaken her.

"You in your seven-league boots!" he exclaimed. "You do walk fast!" And then, as she turned, he held out a lean brown hand to greet her: "How do you do? This is awfully jolly, seeing you again after all these years."

He was handsome, just as Babe had said.

There was something in his manner that was trying very hard to say:

"See how much at my ease I am. See how, after all these years, I've forgotten what a fool I was that night."

But she knew that he had not forgotten any more than she had. As they walked through the woods together, that memory walked with them, between them, as it were, with a hand upon each of them.

They talked of many things—of his adventures in Africa, of her four years at boarding school, of the great war, of the scattering of the old crowd, of tennis and golf and swimming, of the ferns that they passed and the bark of the different trees; and all the while she was thinking of nothing but that night five years ago on that dark veranda, and she knew that he was thinking of nothing else.

They walked on and on. The first mile grew into the second, and still they walked; until suddenly she remembered and came to an abrupt stop.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "I've got to get home and break my engagement!"

"Your what?" he gasped.

She flushed.

"The man I'm engaged to is at home,

and I'm going home now to break off my engagement."

He stared hard at her for a long moment, and then walked along beside her in silence.

She, too, walked in silence. In a queer way, his presence was obliterating everything else in the world. She couldn't think of Archie, or of the gathering dusk, or of that wonderful new life she had been planning for herself, that life so emancipated from love and marriage; she could think only of the man beside her and the sound of his hard breathing.

As it had happened five years ago, she again had that strange premonition of something imminent, but now it filled her with awe instead of with fear.

Her breath came almost in a sob when his arms caught her and his lips crushed themselves hard against her own.

"I didn't want to marry you," he breathed with difficulty. "I can't take you to Africa. But even out there, I couldn't stop thinking about you. I can't help it! I've got to marry you!"

He tightened his arms about her.

She put her hand against his lean brown cheek. She took one last look at that life which was to have been all her own, that alluring life which put the whole world at her disposal, including the great war, where she could have gone as a nurse or a journalist. She had a moment of grim humor for herself, who had so lately repudiated love. Then she couldn't think of anything but his strong arms about her and the feel of his cheek against her hand.

This time there was no reversing of the choice, for she was not the chooser. This time love had chosen her.

"I can't help it either," she murmured. "I've got to marry you."



Elizabeth Hayden's Beauty Parlor

By Grace Livingston Hill Lutz

Author of "Man of the Desert," "The Best Man," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

How one kind-hearted woman transformed the looks and lives of two unattractive women. The way in which she did it will interest any woman.

THE all-day meeting of the Ladies Aid—popularly known among the irreverent youth of Mapleton as "The Ladies All-Day Succor"—was over, and most of the members had gone home.

Only in the well-appointed church kitchen the committee lingered to "clean up;" and in the little alcove off the ladies' parlor, sacred to the sewing machine, Mary Rushmore sat alone stitching the last half dozen of the babies' flannelette nightgowns that were to go to the hospital that week. It was like Mary Rushmore to stay behind and finish those nightgowns in the westerling light from the alcove window. Nobody else would have done it, and they wouldn't have been finished for another month if she had not.

The alcove was a little cut-off between the cloakroom and the dumb-waiter that came up from the larger kitchen in the basement, used when they had big church suppers. The dumb-waiter had an opening into the kitchen and one into the alcove, and both were closed by thin, paneled wooden shutters. The voices of the committee were clearly audible in the alcove, although the noiseless sewing machine gave out no sound, as it glided smoothly over the little pink flannelette garments, to warn the ladies in the kitchen that they were not the only occupants of the church.

Mary Rushmore, intent upon her

work, however, gave no heed to what the ladies were saying until she heard her own name shouted forth in Mrs. Yodel's derisive clang:

"Well, I thought I'd die laughing when I saw Mary Rushmore in that brand-new garnet satin! Did you ever see anything uglier in your life? And she marching around in it proud as a peacock, all jet trimming!"

"Yes, wasn't it unbecoming? And so unsuitable!" agreed Mrs. Twining, a pale-eyed woman whose policy was always to agree with everybody. "Isn't it too bad she should make such a guy of herself? It isn't as if she couldn't afford to dress well. That satin was expensive."

"Oh, yes, she pays enough for her things," sneered Mrs. Yodel. "But you couldn't make her look like anything if you spent millions on her. Look at her figure! Look at her complexion! Look at her hair! You just ought to have to sit behind her in church a while. My Jenny says it makes her sick to watch Mary Rushmore and her sister. Such outlandish costumes! Myra's every bit as dowdy as Mary—I don't know but worse. Last Sunday she had a cerise rose on a red hat, and her suit was bright green. It was something awful! Talk about fixing up! You couldn't fix up those two to look decent. They're hopeless! If I looked the way they do, I'd wear black and sit under the gallery, where I wouldn't be so

prominent. They ought to have a little consideration for other people."

Then the sweet, refined voice of Elizabeth Hayden, lately come to Mapleton, spoke:

"I think you're very much mistaken about Miss Rushmore. She's a fine-looking woman. Her features are beautiful, and her hair has a lovely wave in it if she would only let it show. She looks to me like a woman who never thought much about clothes — just bought what happened to come first and never considered that one thing was more becoming than another. I've just longed to get hold of her hair and loosen it up around her face. Her sister has pretty features, too. They both have—clear cut, you know, like a cameo—and with a sweet expression. People can't be as good and faithful and loyal to their church as they are and not have it show in their faces. And I can think of things they might wear that would make them really beautiful!"

"H'm!" Mrs. Yodel sniffed, clanging the last dozen forks into their gray canton-flannel case and tying the gray tapes with a vigorous yank. "Well, you've got a big imagination, Miss



"Well, I thought I'd die laughing when I saw Mary Rushmore in that brand-new garnet satin! Did you ever see anything uglier in your life?"

Hayden; that's all I've got to say. It's a pity, with that imagination of yours, that you're engaged to such a good-looking young man as Mr. Carroll, because you might have been just as well satisfied with a real homely man. I'm sure I'm glad if somebody thinks poor Mary Rushmore is good looking. I can't! Her hair may have been nice once, but it's getting thin and streaked and its awful gray." Mrs. Yodel had a little round bald spot on the top of her own head that she carefully cov-



The voices of the committee were clearly audible in the alcove.

ered with a switch. "As for decking those two out in anything pretty, I guess the most becoming garment would be a cloak of charity, and mine's about worn out. I just wish you had to sit behind her for a year. Well, these spoons are all counted. If there isn't anything else, I'm going home. My Jenny is going out to-night, and I have to have supper early."

In a little bustle of talk about napkins and baskets, the committee presently left, and the church clock ticked thoughtfully, blatantly on in the ladies' parlor, like a scandalized matron expressing surprise and disapproval with the tip of her tongue in the roof of her mouth: "T, t, t, t, t, t!"

Mary Rushmore sat grimly in the dying sunset stitching pink flannelette and thinking her bitter thoughts.

The glory of her garnet satin had departed. Never again would it seem a goodly garment. All her life she had been accustomed to the hounding,

harrowing conviction that she did not look as well as other people, save for a brief, occasional respite when she had something new. She was always hoping that now she had found something pretty and becoming; yet ever the hope would fail when she caught an unexpected glimpse of herself in a store window or a neighbor's full-length mirror.

But never before had the disillusion come with such swift and startling revelation. The truth had flashed through her soul like a keen sword blade and come out on the other side. There was no withdrawing it without bringing blood. It was a death wound to her pride. No garnet satin—no, nor even purple and ermine—could ever blind her eyes and raise her hopes again to anything like a self-respecting walk among women.

She saw it clearly now—she never had been, and never could be, anything but a plain, homely, awkward, dowdy old maid! All the epithets by which she instinctively knew that the young people of the town described her appearance surged through her wounded soul, ending with the last—"old maid." Of course she was that in looks and years, if not in feelings. She was forty-five last June, and not a soul in town but must think of her as an old maid. She might as well accept it.

But the hardest sting of all was what they had said about Myra.

Myra was ten years younger than Mary, golden-haired, blue-eyed, the idol of her life. Myra was slim to lankness, and pale. She wore bright colors and crimped her hair. She was quiet, faithful, dreamy, and determined. The veil of love had always fallen softly over Myra's imperfections, in spite of a haunting fear that she shared the family curse in regard to appearance. To have this golden veil torn ruthlessly

away, leaving Myra a bald spectacle of bad taste and ugliness, was more than Mary Rushmore could bear; and two great, unexpected tears rolled suddenly down her cheeks and plumped on the pink nightgowns, symbolic baptism of disappointed hopes for the poor little orphans who were to wear them. Mary broke off the thread with a snap from the last little pink hem, and wiped her eyes on the finished nightgown. Her face was stern, the line of her lips was thin and forbidding, but in her heart surged a great tide of wrath and love; disappointment and loneliness.

"Myra shall never know!" she resolved, as she slammed down the cover of the machine and folded the nightgowns in a basket for the janitor to carry to the hospital.

She put on her ugly black hat with snarly feathers, and covered the garnet satin with her long black cloak elaborately trimmed with a braided plush collar and cuffs. She was conscious of hating them both—yes, and even her respectable black kid gloves with their white stitching. But what could she do?

As she shut the church door behind her, she seemed to be shutting away all her dead hopes, and she stepped out into the street shaking, as it were, the dust of the Ladies' Aid from her feet. She had done her duty in pink flannelette, but how could she ever again face those terrible women with their scathing tongues? She shuddered as she thought of having to sit in front of Mrs. Yodel next Sunday, but Myra would never sit under the gallery, as had been suggested, not even if she knew—and Myra must *never know*! Myra was very independent.

The sun shot a passing ray of glory and lit up the windows across the street with ruby flame. Suddenly the thought of Elizabeth Hayden darted across the discomfited soul of Mary Rushmore and comforted her. She felt almost

as if she could die for Elizabeth Hayden.

"You're late!" said Myra, opening the dining-room door as Mary entered the hall. "I'll just bet you stayed to finish those nightgowns. Well, supper's all ready. Don't go upstairs!"

"I want to get this dress off!" said Mary vindictively, already halfway up. "I won't be a minute!"

"It looked real handsome," said Myra complacently, switching on the light and gazing up at the garnet flounce that showed below the coat. "I saw Mrs. Yodel staring at it real hard during the business meeting."

"Yes, I guess you did!"

Mary's voice was grim as she disappeared into her room. Not for anything must Myra see the spasm of pain that crossed her face, or the tears in her eyes. She ripped open the carefully sewed new snap catches viciously and cast the erstwhile precious gown upon her bed in a heap, getting herself quickly into her old challis.

"What a delicious dessert they had to-day!" said Myra at supper. "So much more refined than the pie they usually have. It had whipped cream in it. I wonder who made it?"

"Elizabeth Hayden of course," Mary spoke with conviction, though she had no knowledge on the subject.

"That salad was nice—nuts and apples and celery. I heard them say Mrs. Twining made it."

"I didn't like it. It had too much vinegar."

Mary's face grew hard. Mrs. Twining had called her a "guy!"

"The rolls, of course, were Mrs. Yodel's. They're always so good!" mused Myra.

"I thought they were heavy."

Far into the night, Mary Rushmore lay upon her bed staring wide-eyed into the darkness and hearing again the voices of the committee. Some time

past midnight, the gentle words of Elizabeth Hayden seemed to gain precedence over the others, and the suffering woman began to take cognizance of them. What if she should dare to take Elizabeth Hayden at her word and ask her to help her select some becoming clothes and show her how to fix her hair?

Over and over the thought came, until hope grew and resolve set itself upon her weary features. Then, with the peace of it, she fell asleep.

"I'm going out collecting for the *Missionary Magazine* this morning just as quick as we get the dishes out of the way," announced Mary next morning, coming down with her hat on and her cloak over her arm.

Myra looked disappointed.

"I thought maybe we'd go to town to that missionary conference. They're going to have lunch and dinner at the church, and the speakers at the mass meeting to-night are wonderful, they say. I thought I might do a little shopping at noon. I want to match my red silk waist. The sleeves are about gone."

"You go!" said Mary eagerly. "I'll come later if I get on well. I'll come in for the evening meeting, anyway. You better take the next train if you can get ready. I'll wash the dishes."

She was anxious to get her sister away.

Half an hour later, she was hurrying down the street toward Elizabeth Hayden's home, passing, without realizing it, three houses of people who were on her list. Her heart was beating wildly, and she was not at all sure that she was going to have the courage to speak to Miss Hayden of her trouble after she had collected the magazine money from her.

While she waited in the pretty living room—all gray and yellow, with curtains like sunshine and deeply cushioned chairs of dark wood and leather

—her courage oozed from her fingers and toes. Everything, even the pictures on the walls, the cushions on the couch, the rows of books behind glass doors, the mass of red and gold chrysanthemums in a gray jar on the table, seemed to fit and be perfect; and yet nothing had an expensive or elaborate look. She tried to understand what it was that made this room so attractive. Her own stiff, gilt-papered, plush-upholstered parlor at home was to this room as she herself to its charming owner. A kind of dogged fierceness came into her eyes. She would find out and have this mysterious, elusive something that made the difference, if it were hivable.

Elizabeth Hayden came down in trim brown tailored skirt and dainty, creamy blouse, her magazine money in her hand. Her welcome was so sweet and genuine that Mary Rushmore's courage suddenly returned. She sat up excitedly and began to speak as if her life depended on it.

"I didn't really come for that magazine money at all. I came to ask a favor of you. I don't know what you'll think of me, but I'm going to ask it anyway. If you don't want to do it, I want you to say so, but I've got to ask you. Miss Hayden, I was in the alcove last night, finishing the stitching, while the committee cleaned up, and I heard every word they said!"

"Oh, my dear!" said Elizabeth Hayden, getting up and sitting beside her with a gentle hand on the braided plush cuff. "My dear! I'm so sorry!"

"Well, I don't know as I am. It was true, of course!"

"But they didn't mean it!"

"Oh, yes, they did mean it and a lot more. If you hadn't taken up for me, you'd have heard. It wasn't pleasant, of course, but I'm not complaining. I've just made bold to come and ask if you really meant what you said. Of course I don't mean that about being



"Oh, my dear! I hope you're not burned. I'm afraid it was hot!"

beautiful—I knew you were kind of exaggerating. But if you really think there's any way that Myra and I could look like other folks, I'd like to know it. Did you really mean you'd be willing to help me pick out some clothes and tell me how to fix my hair? I know it's a queer thing to ask of anybody, and you've likely got enough shopping of your own to do; but you said it, and I couldn't help coming to ask."

Then suddenly, without warning, the tears broke through Mary Rushmore's grim determination.

"You poor dear!" said the girl, her

voice falling like balm on the sore heart of the woman. "I think it was perfectly lovely of you to come straight to me, and I certainly meant *every word* I said. You have beautiful features, and I should just love to show those women! They reminded me of cats showing the claws in their velvet paws. I certainly was stirred up! Oh, I'm so pleased you came and asked me! Can we begin right away this morning?"

Mary was brushing away the tears and smiling.

"Whenever it suits you," she said. "I have five hundred dollars I've been keeping for a seal-skin coat. Will that be enough? You're very good! I can't ever thank you——"

"Oh, I don't want to be thanked. It's going to be just fun. And it won't take half that to fit you out beautifully. Shall we take the nine-seventeen train? Or no—suppose we wait a train or two and fix your hair in a new way I know. You've got to try on hats, you know. I've just wanted to get at your pretty hair and fix it. Come right upstairs. Mother is away for a week, and there's no one in the house but the maid in the kitchen."

Mary, trembling, beaming, and fearful, as one about to undergo a necessary, but doubtful, operation, arose and followed. Before she knew what was

happening, she found herself swathed in a Turkish towel and the beauty lady shaking fragrant, hot soapsuds in a big glass bottle.

"I'm just going to give you a shampoo. The hair will be so much more pliable after it," said Elizabeth, dousing on the suds. "It won't take long to dry. I have an electric fan with a small heating attachment."

It was all over before the astonished woman had opportunity to protest.

"Now, while it's drying, I'll give you a facial massage. You haven't any idea how it will rest you. Mother often goes in somewhere and gets one in the city when she's shopping. It saves her many a nervous headache." And a great dab of cold cream was slapped on Mary's nose and rubbed softly and scientifically into the tired, worried wrinkles of her face. With a sudden sense of peace, she relaxed soul and body, which seemed to have been on a strain for years keeping pace with other people, and surrendered to the delicious restfulness that descended upon her.

One by one the hours of unhappy vigil and the marks of disappointment and chagrin fell away. There was a steaming hot cloth that wiped out all past fatigues, and a delicious cold one that revived her spirit. The perfume of the dash of cologne water with which the process ended hovered over her when Elizabeth called her back to earth from the far, vague dream of rose-and-gold mystery into which she had fallen.

When at last she stood before the rose-garlanded dressing table and looked at the youthful face in the mirror, crowned with its waves and coils of soft silver hair fastened with alien pins and combs, she stared in wonder. It was the head of a real lady! And the face was unmistakably attractive. She felt a strange dizziness, as if she had changed heads with some other woman.

"It's wonderful!" she murmured helplessly.

"I hope you're not tired."

"Tired? I never felt so rested in my life!"

"Then let's go at once. We can catch the ten-thirty train if we hurry."

"It's my shape will be the hardest," apologized Mary reluctantly, turning away from this new self in the mirror.

"I'm so stout and short-waisted."

"Oh, that won't be lard. It's all in the cut and fit of the under things. They must have the right kind of lines. We'll attend to that first, to have a good foundation. I'm taking my suit case in with a few things. I may stay overnight at my cousin's if I feel like it. We'll just take a room at the hotel for the day, and then you can have a place to change your things. Oh, it's going to be lots of fun, don't you think so?"

At the station, people stared and turned again to look at Mary. They could not quite make out what there was about her so strange and attractive. A new look of self-respect came into her eyes as she saw it. The miracle was already coming to pass, for her neighbors did not know her!

That was a wonderful day for Mary as she stood delighted by, while Elizabeth and the saleswomen measured and consulted. Now and then she caught a glimpse of her rejuvenated face in a glass, and her eyes shone like two stars under the soft fluff of white hair.

Such wonderful things as they bought! Delicate undergarments, a silk petticoat of silvery gray, gray silk stockings, and gray suede shoes! Was ever such extravagance? What would Mrs. Yodel say? Mary was a bit afraid of those gray suede shoes, but when she thought of them peeping out from under the gray crêpe-de-Chine dress with the Georgette crêpe sleeves they had just bought, they didn't seem so utterly unsuitable for an elderly person like herself, and she held her

peace. They did make her look like a real lady, she acknowledged to herself when she stood arrayed in the gray dress before the long glass.

The crowning wonder was the long, soft, thick camel's-hair cloak of smoky gray, with a collar and cuffs of silver fox.

"It's *real*?" said Elizabeth softly. "And a wonderful bargain! We wouldn't get it for twice that if it wasn't a sample coat they are closing out."

And when Mary put it on, with its long, sweeping lines and the soft gray fur about her face, her dumpy figure had disappeared! She looked the lady, every inch of her. She wouldn't have parted with that coat for five times the sum they asked for it.

They found a conservative little gray French hat, with a velvet rim and soft wings with purple ripples like a dove, that settled down on the silvery hair as if it belonged there. Gray suede gloves, and a silver-mounted gray silk hand bag, the gift of Elizabeth, completed the picture.

Just twenty-four hours to the minute from the time she had sat in the church alcove stitching pink flannelette nightgowns for hospital babies, Mary Rushmore entered the door of a well-known hotel and glimpsed herself in the full-length mirrors that lined one wall of the luxurious office.

Her heart stood still; her gray-shod feet halted; her eyes shone; two pink spots bloomed out in her cheeks. Her own sister would not have known her. And the most amazing thing about it all was that she could not help seeing that she was actually beautiful! She had to acknowledge it to her amazed and doubting soul. Elizabeth's prophecy had come true! She wished Mrs. Yodel would open the door this minute and walk in! She would be willing to face a whole regiment of Yodels now.

Elizabeth made her telephone to the church and invite her sister to dine

with them at the hotel. She emerged from the telephone booth in an ecstasy.

"She's coming," she announced breathlessly. "And what do you think? They've asked her to tell about her mission band at the preliminary conference this evening at seven. Isn't that wonderful? Think of Myra speaking in a big city church! But she'll do it well. She loves her work so much!"

"That's lovely!" cried Elizabeth, watching her protégée with pleased eyes. "But you are lovely, too. It's wonderful how gray brings out the pink in your cheeks. I knew you were beautiful!"

"You'll have me vain yet," said Mary, with a mist of tears in her eyes. "Me vain! Think of it!" Then her face went suddenly blank. "Oh, what am I thinking of? I can't have Myra stand up there and speak to a great city church full of folks with that awful cerise rose in her hat and me all decked out in sweet things like these! Oh, I wish I could fix her up!"

"H'm!" Elizabeth mused thoughtfully, as they went up in the elevator. "I wonder how we could manage it. Would she wear my velvet suit? You know I brought it along. We're about the same size, I think."

"No," said Mary despairingly. "She wouldn't even wear mine if it fitted her. She's very independent. It wouldn't be any use to suggest it."

"Well, never mind, now. I want you to take a little nap and look real rested when she comes."

The unusual excitement of the day had exhausted Mary, and she fell into a light sleep almost at once. Elizabeth, tiptoeing thoughtfully about the room spreading out her velvet suit, watched her furtively, smiling to herself.

"I've just got to doll that sister up, too, somehow or other, or this one's pleasure will be spoiled. I may get into an awful mess, but I guess I'll risk it."

It was a dazed and bewildered Myra that stood in the great hotel office and stared from her hostess to this strange new sister in gray, and back again. She was too timid and too overawed to express her astonishment, and indeed they did not give her time. They led her at once to the dazzling dining room, all silver, cut glass, and millions of electric lights, and seated her at a beautiful round table just big enough for three, with roses in the middle.

"I thought we'd come right out to dinner first to save time," explained Elizabeth. "If you're going to speak, you'll want a little time to freshen up just before you go back to the church."

But Myra's eyes were on her sister, and she scarcely heard what had been said. It was gradually dawning upon her that this was really Mary!

After all, Elizabeth managed it most deftly, and it was well that the new gray gown was on the other side of the table when the plate of rich soup on its way from the tray to the table in front of Miss Myra seemed to tilt itself in the waiter's very fingers and poured down uncompromisingly over the red silk waist, landing in the green cheviot lap. Elizabeth Hayden's immaculate brown skirt was not without



Mrs. Yodel stared as if they had been two ghosts.

a few spots also, for one must sacrifice when great matters are at stake, but there was no use trying to disguise the fact that the red silk waist and the green cheviot skirt were a wreck. Moreover, the soup was hot, and Myra sprang to her feet, forgetful of time and place, and stood gasping in dismay with her dripping hands held out. The wraith of her departing speech loomed upon her immediate vision to the exclusion of all else—that speech that she now saw was never to be made.

Mary Rushmore sat aghast, but Eliz-

abeth Hayden rallied efficiently to the occasion with handkerchief and napkin.

"Oh, my dear! I hope you're not burned. I'm afraid it was hot! Come right up to the room with me, and we'll have you all right in no time. We'll soon be back; don't worry." She nodded brightly over her shoulder to Mary.

And Mary Rushmore sat for several minutes while her soup cooled and stared blankly at the doorway. Could it be possible that Elizabeth Hayden had known that that soup was going to fall on Myra's objectionable dress?

Up in the room, Myra Rushmore was gazing at her wrecked costume with smarting eyes and throat full of tears, while her hostess solicitously disrobed her.

"This skirt will be good as new tomorrow, but it won't dry in time for the meeting. You'll just have to wear my velvet suit. It's fortunate we are the same size, and isn't it lucky I happened to have it along? You see I was thinking of spending the night at my cousin's, and she was giving a reception this afternoon. Here, let me unhook that waist. I hope it isn't a pet one, for I'm sure it's ruined, and I'm afraid I was to blame—raising my hand just as the waiter put down the soup! Anyhow, I shall consider I owe you one silk blouse."

"Oh, you mustn't think of such a thing!" choked out Myra. "It's only an old one. The sleeves are almost worn out. I can dry it by the radiator. You go down to your supper. I'll get along very well. I'll have to make that seven-o'clock train home now. I'm glad it's dark."

"Indeed you'll do no such thing!" declared Elizabeth stoutly, though her heart misgave her when she saw Myra's set lips. "You'll put on this dress of mine and come down to dinner. You're not the woman to care so much for a

little thing like clothes when you have a duty to perform. Besides, it's too late for them to get anybody to take your place in the conference now."

She had found the key to Myra Rushmore's heart. Duty loomed with a capital D, and disaster was averted. With surprising meekness, the independent woman suddenly succumbed to circumstances, and presently stood in amazement before the mirror and saw herself arrayed in a delicate confection of a blouse, all creamy lace and brown chiffon, with touches of vivid blue velvet about the fastenings, and a skirt of brown velvet, simply, but exquisitely made. She stared in awe at herself, and hardly realized what was being done when Elizabeth pushed her gently into a chair and said:

"I'll fix your hair for you. It's all falling down, and I'm sure your hand smarts yet."

And presently the golden crimps became waves, and the whole contour of the head was changed as by a magic touch.

"I oughtn't to let you do this," murmured Myra half hysterically, as a small brown hat wreathed in brown feathers was set upon the now symmetrical head. "I ought to go home! But I do look so nice! I didn't think I could ever look like that!"

"You're lovely," said Elizabeth, holding out a brown velvet coat with a handsome dark fur collar, and the temptation for Myra to see herself in it was too much even for her independence. She meekly accepted the soft tan gloves and the clean handkerchief that were put into her hands and followed Elizabeth back to the dining room, catching on the way frequent glimpses in the long mirror of a slim, genteel lady in brown, with a face of haunting familiarity, and wondering if it were really herself.

And now it was Mary's turn to be amazed, and Elizabeth, her eyes full of

laughter and suppressed tears, sat and watched the two sisters stare at each other and try to act as if they were entirely used to seeing each other like that.

Thus, in purple and fine linen, as it were, did Myra Rushmore make her speech in the city church; and Mary sat proudly in a pew and forgot her own glad plumage, while tears of pleasure openly slipped down her flushed cheeks and made her eyes but brighter.

It was Elizabeth who arose to the occasion again at the close of the meeting.

"Miss Myra," she whispered, while the weary throng surged by their seat, "you don't know how pretty you look in that hat and suit. You ought to have one just like it. Why don't you and your sister stay over with me at the hotel to-night and go shopping to-morrow? We could put a cot in the room and have a regular lark of it. You'd look just heavenly in something light blue, too. I just love to go shopping with people. Come, will you stay and be my guests?"

"Oh, I couldn't!" gasped Myra, wistfully patting the velvet of the sleeve. "You've been very good, but I really couldn't!"

"We will stay, Myra!" said the beautiful lady in gray who was her sister, suddenly arisen in her might. "We will stay of course. I've got new things and you must have them, too, or I won't wear mine!"

That settled it. They stayed.

The next Sabbath morning Elizabeth Hayden went to church early and, sitting demurely on her side of the church, was actually the only one in the congregation who did not stare and wonder at the two elegant strangers who came with dignified bearing down the aisle and sat in the Rushmore seat as if they belonged; one like a gray dove with

silver crest, the other in dull purple cloth with trimmings of silver beaver shading into the cloth in tawny pansy tints, and a hat wreathed about with purple plumes, beneath which her golden hair gleamed in soft waves and coils.

"Just look, ma! There's some awful swell folks in Rushmores' pew. I'm glad I wore my new white spats!" whispered Jenny Yodel, pausing at the door before going to her seat.

All through the service those elegant backs topped by costly furs and handsome hats kept up the illusion. Not even when they caught occasional glimpses of sweet cameo profiles did Jenny and her mother suspect.

But after the benediction, Mary and her sister turned with one consent and faced their sharp-tongued neighbor.

"Good morning, Mrs. Yodel. Good morning, Jenny," said Mary from the vantage of her silver-fox collar. "It's a beautiful day, isn't it?"

But Mrs. Yodel and Jenny could do nothing but stare and stammer. The voice was indeed the voice of Mary Rushmore, but the outward transformation was more than human eye could accept all at once. Mrs. Yodel stared as if they had been two ghosts. Even after they had passed down the aisle, with quiet, dignified bows to right and left, did mother and daughter stand gaping after them; until Elizabeth, watching, turned to the stained-glass angel on the window beside her to hide her smile of triumph.

"Why, ma," whispered Jenny, as the sisters passed out of the church door, "did you take notice? It wasn't just their clothes; it was their faces. Ma, they really looked—*beautiful*! How do you s'pose they did it?"

But for once Mrs. Yodel's voluble tongue had no reply.

The Sower Reaps

By Frank Roland Conklin

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. PUGSLEY

A little story of certain complications that arose in the lives of a young man and two girls.

BE calm, my boy. It doesn't help any to get excited."

"Confound it, Jack, I wish you wouldn't say that! It's most irritating. How can you expect me to be calm with this?" And Kent Irving waved a letter before his friend's face.

"What does she say?"

"To put it briefly, she regrets she finds it necessary to break our engagement, but as such is the case, there's no reason why we should meet again, for her decision is irrevocable. I haven't the remotest idea what it's all about."

"Hum! It hasn't occurred to you it might be a girl?"

"What girl?"

"Olive Wade."

"What can she have to do with it?"

"My dear fellow, when a man does a thing as openly as you do, he can't expect to keep it hidden from the rest of the world."

Kent looked at his friend steadily.

"I don't understand you."

Jack Boyd laughed.

"Want me to draw a diagram for you?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Olive Wade has a cozy little apartment up in Harlem, hasn't she?"

"Yes."

"And you pay for it, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"What do you suppose your friends think about it?"

"What I have told them, of course."

"About her being ill, and all that?"

"Yes."

"My dear Kent, ordinarily you would be believed in anything, but a man isn't even expected to tell the truth in a case like this."

"You mean all of you think I've lied?"

"I wouldn't put it so bluntly, but that's about it. None of our crowd hold a thing like that against you, of course."

"I see. And I suppose this story, with 'added attractions,' has reached Florence?"

"It seems very likely."

"And she dismisses me without a hearing. I didn't think that of her."

"I wouldn't let it worry me. She'll probably want to see you in a few days, and you can fix it up."

"I don't know that I care to."

"Oh, come, Kent! You must make allowances for a woman brought up with the old-fashioned ideas that Florence has. You've always boasted that as one of her greatest charms."

"I can make allowances for everything—except that she believed. I don't love that way, and that isn't the way I want to be loved."

Jack Boyd made a gesture of mock despair.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

Kent did not answer directly.

"Jack," he said, "it's men like you



"Why do you ask me to marry you when you don't love me?"

who keep a great deal of good from being done in this world."

"So?" Boyd lazily blew a smoke ring into the air.

"I helped Olive Wade when she was greatly in need," Kent went on, "and this is the reward you and the world give me. Not that I want any reward—except to be let alone. Because I had no mother—not even a near relative—to take her to, should I have been afraid of what people would say and let her die?"

"There are plenty of charitable institutions—hospitals and things that you pay to keep going—aren't there?"

"I suppose there are—but that isn't exactly my idea of lending a helping hand. I'm going ahead and do what I think right. What people say or think will make no difference."

"That's all very pretty in theory, but it *does* make a difference. Your broken engagement, for example."

"True. But I'll know better how to fight, now that I see what to expect. You asked me a moment ago what I was going to do. First I'll marry Olive Wade."

Boyd sat up in alarm.

"Don't be an ass!" he exclaimed.

"I try to be of real help to another human being," Kent continued, ignoring the interruption, "and by so doing I disgrace her in the eyes of the world. Therefore, I'll do what I can to obliterate that disgrace."

"But, my dear Quixote, she's not in our crowd! She's—a—er—well, only a working girl, you know."

"All the more reason for me to help her. If she was 'in our crowd,' as you call it, she could take care of herself—or find plenty of people to assist her."

"You're hopeless!" groaned Boyd. "I give you up! Go ahead and do what you please."

"I'm going to."

Kent found Olive Wade sitting by

her window in the sunshine, sewing. She was a frail girl, and still showed signs of recent illness, but there was a cheeriness in her smile of welcome that warmed his heart.

"You're not working too hard?" he asked, looking dubiously at the pile of fluffy garments beside her.

"No, indeed. I can take as long as I wish, and I'm making money all the time. Five cents for each one I finish."

"Five cents!" gasped Kent. "Good Lord! I wouldn't do it."

Olive laughed.

"It's a little something to help until I'm strong enough for other work."

"What I would advise," said Kent, feeling around to begin in a diplomatic way what was uppermost in his mind, "is a trip abroad."

"That would be nice," she smiled, "only I haven't done quite enough sewing yet to make it possible."

"Then go with me. We can be married right away and go over on our honeymoon."

She glanced up at him doubtfully.

"I really mean it," he continued earnestly. "Will you marry me?"

Warm color came to her pale cheeks, then faded.

"But," she protested, "you're going to marry Miss Foster."

"No."

"Don't you love her?"

This was unexpected, and Kent hesitated. Did he love Florence Foster? Then he remembered the cold letter in his pocket.

"No. She broke our engagement."

"Why?"

The question was so ingenuous, showing simply surprise that any one could break an engagement with him, that Kent smiled.

"I'm really not sure. Jack says he thinks——"

He stopped abruptly. Concealment was not his strength, and he flushed guiltily as he looked at her.

"Me?" She remembered the look she had seen on his friend's face when the two men had called on her together one afternoon, and she began to understand.

"Why, yes, in a way," he floundered. "Some one has given her a much-garbled account of our relations. Our engagement is broken, and I'm not sorry to be free. To be condemned without a hearing rather dampens one's enthusiasm, you know." He smiled weakly.

"Aren't you a little too severe?"

"It isn't I who am severe. But that's all over now. The question is: Will you marry me?"

"Why do you ask me to marry you when you don't love me?"

"Well, you see——"

Again Kent was in deep water. "Everything has gone sort of wrong—been misunderstood—and that would be the simplest way to straighten it all out."

"You mean you feel responsible for the things said about me, and are willing to sacrifice yourself for my good name?"

"Why, no, Olive. - We get along splendidly together."

She looked at him sadly, wistfully.

"No one cares about my good name and you have many friends to think of."



"I fear I am the cause of a misunderstanding between you," Olive began a little haltingly, "and I should like to explain."

"Friends?" he questioned, a little bitterly. "I'm finding out many things about my friends."

"I couldn't marry you unless you loved me."

"You mean if you thought I loved you, you would?"

"Please!" He did not know how he was tempting her.

"Do you know I'm beginning to think I do?" He looked down at her thoughtfully.

"Ah, but that is so different from knowing!"

"And when I know, I may come again?"

She bent her head over her sewing.

Kent needed the open air to think in, so he walked down through the park.

Two women.

On the one hand, Florence—stately, a little imperious, but very feminine, the kind of woman a man feels pride in having seen beside him. He was sure it would require no great effort to resume their former relations, but he was too deeply hurt to make the first move.

On the other hand, there was Olive Wade; a sweet, tenderly clinging type of woman, yet withal a personality eloquent of capability and strength. He had known her for some time, but, thinking of her in this new light, he found much to admire.

Not that he loved both women, but he felt it would take little pressure to break the even balance and tip the scales. He would wait for fate to bring the little or the big thing.

An hour later, Olive was waiting in the hall of the Foster mansion.

When Florence entered, she rose nervously. The splendor of this girl, scarcely older than herself, awed her. The perfect poise, the easy assurance of the highly bred woman of the world made her feel insignificant. The thought that this was the other woman who loved Kent sent a sharp pang to her heart.

"I am Olive Wade," she faltered. "I've come to tell you of Mr. Irving and myself."

"Yes?" Florence lifted her eyebrows slightly, and her pretty lips straightened into a severe line. "Pray be seated."

"I fear I am the cause of a misunderstanding between you," Olive began, a little haltingly, "and I should like to explain."

Her only encouragement was a coldly questioning stare.

"It won't take very long," she struggled on hopefully, "but to make it clear I must start at the beginning. A number of years ago, father, thinking he saw better opportunities for success, moved to the city. Through illness, he lost his position. Then misfortune followed misfortune until he found employment with Mr. Irving. But he never wholly recovered and about a year ago died. Then mother was taken sick. I had a position, but was not making enough to give her proper care. Some one told Mr. Irving, and he did all he could for mother, but it was too late."

She paused until she could control her voice.

"It had been a greater strain than I could stand, and Mr. Irving, instead of letting me go to a hospital, put me in a small apartment with a trained nurse. It is through his kindness that I am nearly well and strong again."

"Is that all?" Florence asked coldly, after a pause.

"Why, yes." Olive looked up wonderingly.

"It was very cleverly done—but not cleverly enough."

"I—I—don't understand." Olive rose, bewildered.

"But I do," was the sharp reply. "I understand perfectly. Good afternoon."

Olive went gropingly to the door and fled from the house.

In the white heat of anger and indignation at what she considered an insult, Florence penned a hasty note to Kent.

He read it many times without comprehending:

In the future kindly refrain from sending your mistress to plead your cause.

Then what Olive had tried to do came to him. Now he *knew*, and could go to her. Fate had sent the big thing.

The Third Year

By Ethel and James Dorrance

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

A story of Married Life and Mysterious Happenings. Does it end as you thought it would? The first part of the story appeared in the October number.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALTHOUGH Theodore Knox sat in his own particular swivel chair, behind his regular desk, which was bulwarked as usual with a disarray of sheepskin-covered volumes of legal reports, his mind refused to concentrate on the case in hand. After all, what were the tangled affairs of the Consolidated Transport Corporation compared to those that had lately come into his own life?

He found himself thinking about Selma; not so much about what she might do as what she really was. Had he relied too much on her stability? Was the change in her from radical inner sources or was it, as he had up to now believed, only superficial? Could a woman's love for her husband die because he failed to bring home real success? Could it be that this Philip Dunlap, or even Gordon—

But no; either supposition was unworthy. Gordon he believed to be a crook. Of Dunlap's unscrupulousness about women he had suspicions, which might or might not be attributable to jealousy. Was he trusting too much to the strength of a child woman like Selma? Why did he not forcefully protect her from both these men? Surely, when he himself had definite reasons for refusing invitations to the Gordon house, he might be excused for forbidding his wife their hospitality. And to allow her to bring them into the

home apartment—was that strength or weakness?

He and Selma were in their third year together, the period that he considered the vital test of marriage. With the early flush of romance faded, with its youthful outlines gone, with nothing but the heart of it left, love proved itself in the third year.

He arose suddenly from his desk and took a couple of turns around the room, in sudden determination to shed from his mind these questions which he could not answer. The third year and its consequences could be developed only by the third year. He must return to the work before him.

The fact that Spencer Gordon himself represented the snag in the legal complication with which he was struggling made it increasingly difficult to banish personal worries. Ever since that ill-advised trip to the tropics, he had recognized the banker as a lofty hurdle that must be topped; first because of his misguided and too flagrant infatuation for Selma, then for the sake of the suit to which the firm was vitally committed.

He marshaled the various developments of the legal complication before his mind. Corporate interests which his firm had always represented planned a union of the coastwise shipping companies to be known as the Consolidated Transport Corporation. The final papers were being drawn when Spencer

Gordon had appeared in the offing and, as a minority stockholder in the Atlantic Navigation Company, had brought an injunction suit to restrain the move. The books of the Atlantic showed Gordon to be decidedly a minority interest, he holding but two shares out of ten thousand. Yet it had become necessary to defend the suit and, in consequence of the publicity attracted thereby, to satisfy the Federal authorities that the proposed combine was within the law.

The office work on the complicated case had occupied Knox almost exclusively since his return from the South, and victory had seemed within grasp when the injunction that Gordon had secured was dissolved by the courts.

But the banker had been shrewd beyond their anticipation. Utilizing the time during which the suit had been pending and the suit itself as a club, he had secured a controlling interest in the stock of the Atlantic Company and was now in a position to thwart the entire consolidation. No sooner had decision been rendered against him than he had suddenly changed front. He had disclosed his control of the vital company, and had incited the consolidators to come to him and meet his price or fight a ruinous war of marine competition. And his ultimatum might have been met had the price not been the prohibitive one of a Wall Street wolf who believed that he had the upper hand.

Both Judge Strong and Colonel Cadwell, leaders of the law firm that Theodore served, had been frank in discussing with him the most recent phase of the case. Although the fault could in no way be charged against them, they were committed, in the public mind, to the success of the consolidation. Its failure would mean a loss of prestige as corporation attorneys that would be immeasurable. Admitting their own inability to find legal methods of forcing Gordon's hand, they had confided in

Theodore the vital nature of the issue and had assigned him to find some way out, if it took his whole winter.

Thoroughly grounded in the law, with precept and precedent cases at his finger tips, the young silent partner had searched the libraries in vain for a means of forcing a man to vote, against his judgment, stock that he owned by right of purchase. That Gordon had used misrepresentation as to the gravity of his injunction suit was highly probable, but it was not the sort that was beyond the law. So far as Theodore could see, there was but one chance left and that concerned the purchase itself.

Gordon had acquired his control of the Atlantic stock by paying cash for it; had been forced, in fact, to acquire it that way, for shady past transactions had rendered credit purchase impossible for him. The sum involved was greatly beyond any means the credit investigators had ever attributed to him. What Theodore particularly wanted to know at this stage of the fight was where the money had come from.

He opened a red-covered volume that bore the euphonious inscription "Directory of Directors" and turned to the "G's." Gordon's name and Broad Street address he soon found and began to scan the list of corporations in which the banker was an officer. He noticed, with a grim smile, that, although the directory was of recent issue, Atlantic Navigation was not included in the suspect's list of directorships. It seemed that Gordon had dabbled in many lines—oil, coal, mines, wood pulp, leather, powder, and steel—but most of these companies might be classed as "wild-cats" and Theodore judged that they signified no financial connections that might comprehend those recent wholesale purchases of Atlantic stock for cash.

It was on his second review of this unofficial, but reliable record that he

was struck by a particular notation—"President Taplock National Bank." Chagrined that the significant possibilities of this connection had not struck him before, he bore down with the point of his pencil against the line. The bank he knew to be one of the smallest in the city, a relic of bygone days and changed times that barely held its national charter. Yet it presented potentialities of high finance that might have appealed to one of Spencer Gordon's daring. A smile crossed the worry creases from the young lawyer's face as he measured the prospects that his stumbling discovery might evolve.

The next moment his frown was restored by the disturbance of a knock at his door—when he had left orders that he was not to be interrupted. In answer to his gruff "Come in," an office boy entered with a black-bordered card and an apology for disobeying orders:

"I didn't tell her you were here. But she's got ways that kind of make you mind. She says it's personal and very important."

Theodore scanned the old-English engraving—"Madame Olivia Mendez." At first glance, the name meant nothing to him. Not until the boy had described the caller, in language more photographic than elegant, did he associate it with the beautiful mystery woman to whom he had been introduced by Dunlap on the *Carihbean*.

"Show her in," he said at last.

No sign of his recent impatience showed in his greeting of the superbly handsome woman who entered. Dressed in a tailor-made of simple lines and obvious cost, whose color set off her black hair and navy-blue eyes, she shook hands with him, smiled in a gentle way, and took the chair he offered.

"I have come that I may ask legal advice on a personal matter," she began, with a hesitating, slightly foreign accent.

No matter why you have come, I feel honored that you even remembered me," said Theodore.

She smiled again vaguely.

"Ah, I could not forget you! You were recommended to me as the most honest lawyer in New York. And then your wife, she is indeed beautiful! She alone would distinguish you among men. How is Madame Knox? At home and well, I have hope?"

"Yes, yes, thank you."

In spite of himself, Theodore felt that his face showed trouble, and that the stranger had noticed it.

Her eyes gazed straight into his for a moment, then swerved with a pitying look.

"This matter on which I seek advice," she said, "is a business affair of my late husband. He died very sudden here in your New York and leave everything at sevens and sixes."

Señor Mendez, according to the widow's story, had come North to dispose of a half interest in a concession that he had secured from his own government—that of Honduras. She believed it to be quite valuable. He had written her that he had succeeded, had inclosed a draft for ten thousand dollars with which she was to meet some pressing obligations at home, and had promised to return on the next steamer. Before he could sail, he had succumbed to an old wound from which he had long suffered. There was nothing suspicious about his death, she averred, but the company with which he had done business in the financial district now claimed the entire concession, while she was sure that her husband had sold but a half interest.

The case was out of Theodore's line, and from a stranger he would scarcely have accepted it. But there was an appeal about the foreigner's manner that moved him to promise at least a preliminary investigation. When in the



Octavia arose from her cot, somber-eyed and graceful, as they greeted her.

tropics, he had inquired somewhat into the subject of concessions and the laws governing them, and had brought home a small library that he might delve into the subject at his leisure. He took charge of the small packet of documents that she had brought with her and said he would give the matter the attention of his first leisure.

The brief consultation had been conducted on thoroughly business lines, but at the door Madame Mendez turned with one of the most wistful smiles he had ever seen on a woman's face.

"You have been most kind," she said. "That I appreciate more than I can say. You see, Mr. Knox, I am particularly alone in New York and—often very lonely. Could I not have the pleasure of acquaintance with your beautiful wife? Perhaps you yourself will honor me and bring her to call on me?"

"Why—why, yes, I'd be glad to," stammered Theo, wondering at the pathos in the dark eyes raised to his.

"My address is on the card. You will not forget? Good morning, Mr. Knox."

For some time after the departure of his unexpected visitor, the lawyer stood looking down at the tomes upon his desk. A greater repulsion than before toward them and the concentration they demanded seized him. He simply could not, would not, force himself to work longer against his inclinations that day. This must be one of the times that come to every man's brain when a total change of thought is necessary. Even though it was not yet noon, he decided to go home and look up that book on Central American legal practice that he hoped might hold the key to the beautiful stranger's problem.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I've got myself quite wrought up over your loss," was the spoken greeting which supplemented that of Philip Dunlap's hand as Selma opened the door to him. "Sat up for hours last night, figuring on the most effective way of recovering your treasures. They certainly haven't evaporated. They're somewhere and we must get them back for you."

"Oh, I hope you can!" breathed Selma, cheered by his vehemence.

"I don't think there's much doubt that your servant is at least involved," continued the engineer, as they walked down the hall to the library, where Pembroke was waiting. "We must force her to disclose the identity of her visitor of yesterday. The best plan that occurs to me is for you, Pembroke, and myself to visit police headquarters and have a serious talk with the girl. After a night in a cell, she'll probably be more willing to save herself from herself."

"But your time?" protested Selma. "You have such important affairs of your own at stake."

"What more important affair could I have, although not my own, than——" His downward glance of reproach finished what was a rare outburst for him.

A thrill caught Selma that he should prove so satisfactory a friend in need. Impulsively she caught his hand, but dropped it at once when she felt how it trembled.

Leaving Dunlap with the detective, she hurried to dress for the street. She realized a deep relief that the engineer felt so convinced of her servant's connivance in the robbery. It had a soporific effect upon her vague uneasiness about Theo.

Selma Knox needed all the support of Dunlap's considerate manner and Professor Pembroke's optimism to withstand the depressing effect of her first visit to police headquarters. Be-

yond asking directions from some uniformed patrolman on beat or accepting the protection of traffic officers at crowded crossings, this was her introduction to the guardians of the public peace. She shuddered as she crossed the portals of the graystone building, with its Bastille effect, for, in stepping from the taxi that had brought them from Washington Square, she had glanced up and realized the significance of its barred windows. Almost did she feel as if she herself had been apprehended, as if the two men with her were captors bringing her to punishment.

An almost comradely feeling for Octavia tempered her indignation at being despoiled of the emeralds. Her soft-voiced, mournful-eyed, ever-ready servant had spent a night behind those bars! Possibly her fingers had clutched and shaken them in a desperate demand for freedom. But at thought of Octavia's fingers—those slim, capable fingers—the clement mood oozed from Selma. Was it not their very deftness that had effected the opening of the secret drawer upon whose existence she had spied under pretense of placing the poinsettias that night of the first dinner?

Somehow, the more she felt convinced of the maid's guilt, the lighter grew her mind, which had been almost unendurably depressed since the departure of her husband that morning. One glance at the iron bars had given her a hint of the truth regarding Theodore's attitude. Through his law work, he was familiar, of course, with the dole of imprisonment, especially the first imprisonment peculiar to this graystone palace of punishment, through the halls of which they now walked. He had been moved by sympathy for Octavia,—by that alone. The thought that he could have been concerned in any way with the disappearance of the emeralds she dismissed as the hysteria of overstrained nerves—certainly not worthy of her mind.

The first complication of the morning, which was to hold several, was encountered in the anteroom of the police commissioner's office. It soon developed that the card of Professor David Pembroke, psychic detective, was not the open sesame which that urbane individual had predicted. They were received by a gruff sergeant who seemed no respecter of beauty in distress or the fascination of tropical tan on male cheeks. Without any consultation with higher authority, he referred the trio to the office of the detective bureau in another part of the building.

There Pembroke assailed another sergeant with the spell of his mental powers and alleged renown, while Mrs. Knox and Dunlap held the background of a bench against the wall. From what they could gather of the one-sided colloquy, the detective in charge at the moment was not in a receptive mood. He had never heard of Pembroke, and, since the psychologist was not accredited to any recognized agency for the detection of crime, he had no passport other than that of a private citizen. Pembroke was told that he need not expect recognition from a *real* detective who was uncommonly busy that morning.

The professor returned to them, his billowy face hectic with chagrin, and advised an appeal to the mayor in behalf of his flouted professional dignity. Then it was that Philip Dunlap again displayed what seemed characteristic capability. His quiet aside with the official, to the effect that Mrs. Theodore Knox, whose Washington Square apartment had been robbed of emeralds worth several thousand dollars, was waiting for an interview with her suspected servant, brought instant consideration.

In a few minutes a matron appeared, and they were ushered into an inner room.

"Wonder if you can identify these,

Mrs. Knox?" asked the buxom, flagrantly cheerful custodian of feminine criminality, dangling a pair of black silk stockings before the younger woman's gaze.

On examination of them, Selma's eyes lighted with relief; an emotion, however, due neither to the recovery of property she had not missed nor to the importance of the circumstantial evidence against Octavia. Of course the vague suspicions she had felt, rather than thought, against Theo were utterly ridiculous and unworthy! How could she ever have strayed so far from sanity as to be troubled by them! If the girl would steal one thing, she would another. The capability to steal, she had often heard Theo declare, was accumulative.

Virile hope caught her. Phil Dunlap's intuitions had again proven infallible. Her jewels would be recovered. They would get the maid off as lightly as possible, after which she and her husband could join in wholehearted rejoicing.

"They are mine." With a start, she attended the reiterated query of the matron, indicating the monogram "S. K." embroidered in both hems. "I had not noticed that they were gone. Where did you find them?"

"Where?" The woman accustomed to contact with crime gave a comfortable chuckle as she glanced with unvoiced apology at the gentlemen present. "Why, on the legs of our sad-eyed pretty, to be sure! Looks as if you had a clear case of petty."

"A case of—*what?*" murmured Selma.

"The stockings would only come under petty larceny, ma'am. They tell me it's a case of jewels. But one thing I can say—she had nothing of the sort about her, unless she ate them for safety."

"Perhaps," suggested Dunlap, "we'd better talk to the young woman rather

than speculate on her appetite for theft."

"That's the idea. It won't take me long to uncover the truth," seconded Pembroke, as he waddled forward with the energetic matron.

Octavia arose from her cot, somber-eyed and graceful, as they greeted her, and stood during the interview that followed.

Yes, she had taken the stockings. She had been sorry, very sorry, to do so, for Mrs. Knox had always been most kind. But she had needed them.

As she entered this futile defense of the small thief, her eyes were downcast, but her lips twitched. Why, Selma wondered. Could it be that behind the girl's gentle, seemingly simple manner, there lurked a sense of humor?

"You had your wages. Why didn't you buy things for yourself?" she could not refrain from asking.

"I was always forced to give my money to another. My—my mother is ill," Octavia faltered.

"Of course she is," nodded the matron, with her plump, beaming smile. "The mothers or husbands or children of pretty thieves like you always are."

Professor Pembroke interrupted impressively:

"My friends, we are only wasting time on these lay questions. We have come, young woman, to hear your confession. Look me straight in the eyes, please. Ah, that is better! Now, miss, we know—that is, I know—that you took the Knox emeralds and are cognizant of their present whereabouts. Do not try to remove your gaze from mine, for you cannot do it. I am looking into your soul. I read it as plainly as a book. I see there guilt and fear. Do not shrink from me, do not move. You cannot take your eyes from—"

His deep, powerful utterances ceased as Octavia, her lips again twitching in that odd way, deliberately turned from

him and stood looking out of the cell door.

Phil Dunlap was smiling as he volunteered a small part in her persuasion.

"I am no hypnotist, Octavia," he said, "but I am convinced that you—or your man friend, with your assistance—took Mrs. Knox's jewelry. You only make it harder for yourself by denial. If you will be the sensible girl you have seemed in other ways, if you will confess and leave it in our hands to get you off as lightly as possible—"

"How can I confess, Mr. Dunlap, when I know nothing of the theft?" The prisoner spoke with her first show of impatience.

It occurred to Selma that the girl may have found the engineer's simpler form of address more hypnotic than that of the professor, with all his claims. She herself seconded Dunlap's plea.

"If you will only tell, Octavia, I will do everything in my power to persuade them to be easy upon you. I know you are young and probably in love with some one who has encouraged you in evil ways. I don't want to see you in this cell. I don't want them to punish you. I want to get you off. But unless you will be frank with me, I'll have to let the law take its course. You see that, don't you?"

Straight into the tears that Selma could feel gathering in her own eyes, so really caught was she by the pity of it all, stared Octavia.

"You are very kind, Mrs. Knox. But I did not take your emeralds. I do not know who took them. And I do not know where they are."

The climax of this stoic denial was broken by an official summons that the whole party should present themselves at once in the office of the commissioner.

CHAPTER XV.

The public elevator, available to Selma and her two escorts, moved more

rapidly than did the inner one used to carry prisoners from the basement to the examination rooms above. In consequence, the three reached the office of the deputy commissioner of police before the matron arrived with Octavia.

Something of a surprise awaited the visitors, in the presence of Theodore Knox. He was seated beside the huge, flat-topped desk that occupied the room's center, talking to a man somewhere near his own age.

With a small, suppressed cry, Selma hurried toward him.

"It must have been the maid," she said, as he arose and pleasantly greeted her. "The matron found her wearing a pair——"

But she checked herself at the cautionary gestures of both her husband and the official. Following their gaze, she saw a young man in a distant part of the room, evidently in the custody of the uniformed policeman who stood beside him.

"The man who came to see Octavia!" murmured Selma. "Where——"

The police official interrupted.

"Take your prisoner into the other room, officer. I'll send for you presently."

As the patrolman went out, Theo nodded to Philip Dunlap and motioned him to join them, but ignored the psychological detective. He turned to his wife.

"Selma, this is Billy Howard, deputy commissioner of police, of whom you've heard me speak. We were classmates at Harvard, and he's ready to do anything in his power to recover your loot. Mrs. Knox, commissioner. I also want you to meet Mr. Dunlap. He is a shipmate and friend who had a sort of prescience about these emeralds—in fact, warned us against keeping them in the apartment."

Grasping the fact that Knox proposed to ignore him in the introductions, Professor Pembroke propelled

himself forward and tendered his card to the deputy, who glanced at it, then smiled with easy tolerance.

"I have heard of you, Pembroke," he said.

"So? Most people in the business have," beamed he of subtle powers. "I have been on the case from the start, Mr. Commissioner. I divined the maid's guilt at once and arrested her. The matron downstairs has just corroborated my insight by taking from the girl a pair of silk stockings marked with Mrs. Knox's monogram."

"But tell us, where did you find the man in the case?" insisted Dunlap. "I can identify him as the fellow I saw visiting the maid yesterday afternoon."

The deputy commissioner gestured toward Theodore.

"We have Mr. Knox's quick wit to thank for this latest capture."

"Say, rather, the West Indian hall-boy at the apartment house," declared Theodore modestly. "At the office this morning, I found I needed a book that was at home. As I didn't feel much like work, I returned to get it. Before going in, I noticed this young fellow loitering across the street and remarked to myself that we had the same taste in clothes. In the hall, George, the boy, called my attention to him, declaring that he was the man who had visited Octavia. I went back for another look, became more impressed with the resemblance of the suit he wore to an old one of my own, and followed him until we met a policeman, who effected his arrest. Sure enough, his habiliments were mine own, as was proven when they searched him at the police station. The tailor's mark, with my name and the date of purchase, had not been clipped from the inside breast pocket."

"What did I tell you?" chortled Pembroke, his palms rubbing together in congratulation. "I said, hold the girl, find the man, and you'd have the thieves

of your jewels. Once more psychological insight has triumphed!"

A clerk entered with a card of fingerprint records, which he handed to the deputy.

"Here is his record," said the latter, after glancing over the card. "He is Don Raynor, aged twenty years, and he was released from the reformatory at Elmira only four weeks ago. He was sent there for stealing silver from a house on West End Avenue, which he entered by pretending to be an inspector from the gas company. Evidently the Elmira cure didn't take in his case. But in the event of a conviction in this instance, we can give him a more drastic dose of Sing Sing."

"But my emeralds?" reminded Selma, who suddenly realized that, despite the seeming apprehension of the guilty pair, her treasure was as absent as ever.

"We'll have them back in a very few days, Mrs. Knox. You can depend upon it."

The deputy leveled on her the reassuring smile that he reserved for very beautiful women who came to him in distress; then sent for the young prisoner.

Raynor, after one glance at the finger impressions in black ink, admitted his identity and the fact that he had recently been released for good behavior.

"And I've been running straight since I got out, chief," he added in a tone of protest. "That bit at Elmira did me good."

"What are you working at?" asked the deputy.

"Say, now, I've only been out a month, and it takes time to land a job when you ain't got references. Besides, I had a piece of luck. My aunt died while I was put away and left me a couple of centuries of insurance money. I been taking my time looking around."

"I'll bet his aunt that died is in the

same heaven where Octavia's sick mother is headed for," contributed the matron in a whisper to Selma. "The couple of hundred is most likely the girl's wages."

"What about that suit you're wearing?" demanded Deputy Howard.

"From the Salvation Army. They're real people. They've got a heart for a fellow that's running square and looking for work."

Selma shook her head and whispered to the deputy that the suit had not been given away, that it had been in a closet of the apartment two days before.

"I can lead you to the fellow that give it to me." Raynor evidently intended to give bluff an honest trial.

"Where did you meet Octavia Brown?"

The young crook was not yet completely discouraged.

"Don't know any fellow by that name."

Howard frowned.

"Come now, Raynor, you're talking stupidly."

He stepped to a door at one side of the room and beckoned to some one within. Selma's servant appeared, her manner calm, her face expressionless, until her eyes fell upon young Raynor. Then she suddenly weakened and, sinking into a chair, dropped her face into her hands.

Raynor turned from the sight of her emotion nervously. His bravado was so obviously shaken by the girl's tears that further denial of an acquaintance seemed useless.

"Guess I'd better whip a little more truth into my story, chief," he offered with a flaccid smile. "I do know Octavia, here. She's been my best girl since long before I did my bit. It was all my fault about the suit. I saw it hanging in the closet when I went to see her where she's working. The one the Army folks give me wasn't fit for hunting a job in, so I conned her that

this wasn't good enough for her boss. I took it plumb against her wishes, and I guess I can stand for my own deeds, not her. Let her go. She ain't done nothing."

"That does very well for a start, Raynor." The deputy nodded approvingly. "Now suppose you tell us where you pawned Mrs. Knox's jewels, and how Octavia came to tell you where they were concealed."

"The emeralds? So that's what all the how-dy-do is about?"

Either the young man's surprise was real or a finished bit of acting. Despite his previous record, his immediate falsehoods, and the circumstantial evidence of the too-large suit of clothes that then hung upon him, his protestations seemed sincere.

"I never saw any emeralds at the Knox joint, let alone know where they are."

"But you seem to know of their existence?" she asked.

"Sure! Octavia told me about them."

"My dear young man"—Pembroke pushed forward and fixed the youth with his pale gaze—"the worthy commissioner, here, is only supposing that you are guilty. I know it. Psycho-analysis has proven it to me. So you'd better come across at once."

"Think of having a thing like that in your system—psycho-analysis!"

The youth with the parole grinned openly as he transferred his gaze from

the perspiring professor to the commissioner. But he reiterated his denial.

"It's framing me you bulls are trying!" he cried when he saw that he was not believed. "That's what I get for coming back and trying to build up a good name! I got my fingers burned once lifting a lady's tin. Never again for mine!"

The deputy commissioner turned to Octavia and urged upon her the advisability of the truth, pointing out that she would be dealt with leniently as a first offender, particularly if she aided the police. But the story she sobbed out tallied with that of her sweetheart. She had taken Mrs. Knox's stockings and had allowed Raynor to filch Mr. Knox's suit, but of the disappearance of the jewelry she knew absolutely nothing.

"Take them both downstairs," commanded Howard.

Hearing Selma's gasp of despair, he turned to her when the prisoners were gone.

"The rest of this will be easy enough for us, Mrs. Knox. My promise that you shall have your emeralds back holds good. Just a little more time, some skilled grilling of this precious pair of crooks with our repertoire of threats—Why, there can be no doubt of the ultimate result!"

"And where I am at my best," put in the undaunted psychologist, "is exactly at this stage of the investigation.



For some seconds after he knew that the receiver at the other end of the line had found its place in the nicked Y—

You have heard some of my theories, Mrs. Knox. You will have the opportunity in this very stubborn case to see their success in practice. If this charming lady"—he smiled and bowed to the plump police matron—"will see that I have access to the two of them, you may expect results soon."

And, indeed, that otherwise sane and cheerful-seeming person seemed to have psychic susceptibilities, for, guided by Pembroke's pudgy hand at her elbow, she permitted him to accompany her from the deputy's office, chatting amiably the while.

Shortly Selma found herself at the main entrance of the grim building, with her husband and Philip Dunlap.

"I am distressed—heartbroken about Octavia," she declared, almost in tears. "She is so pretty and young and appealing, and it looks now as if the fault were all the man's—as if she had been compelled to it through his hold on her. I wish we'd never sent her to jail. Isn't there anything I can do now to get her back?"

"You can stop being sentimental about it," said Theo rather rudely.

Dunlap looked surprised at his tone; then turned to Selma with sympathetic eyes.

"You show yourself a true woman to feel that way, Mrs. Knox. But perhaps, after it's all over, you can make up to Octavia by showing her better ways. Come now, you two, have a nice luncheon with me and let's get this reeking prison atmosphere out of our lungs! There comes a seagoing taxi, with its red flag out. What do you say, Knox?"

"Have lunch?" To Theo's spoken words, his look at Dunlap suggested an insolent addendum: "With you?"

In the next second he recovered the cordiality of manner he had shown in



—Theodore Knox sat staring at the mouthpiece before him, his jaw lax, his eyes blazing with resentment.

the deputy's office, although he declined the invitation under his usual plea of pressure of work.

"But take Mrs. Knox by all means, if she wishes to go," he added, and himself hailed the cab.

Selma studied her husband closely as he bade her farewell through the open window of the taxi. Knowing his usually even temper, she had caught the slight, but intense lack of it and felt perturbed. Why would he not have luncheon with them, since it was to be assumed that he must have luncheon somewhere? Could it be that Theo had other engagements? And why did he follow this policy of literally throwing her at the handsome engineer? Had he no jealousy?

If a man really loved a woman, she thought, he ought to be jealous. Why, it was a wife's right to have her husband jealous!

The questions remained in her mind with the goodly aggregation marshaled against her husband of late.

CHAPTER XVI.

The mystified, uneasy mood went with Selma as the taxi started on its uptown way. She turned to Dunlap

the face of a complaining child, attractive only because so beautiful.

"Oh, for the truth about people!" she sighed. "Mr. Gordon says I'm subtle, and Professor Pembroke has urged me to trust my instincts, but somehow I don't seem to be wise about those who are nearest to me. Emily puzzles me. Mr. Gordon is a conundrum. Even Theo, who used to seem so simple, has suddenly grown more complex than any of his legal problems."

Philip Dunlap listened with serious, considering eyes fixed on hers.

"Uncongenial people are always problems. Knox is a nice chap, of course, but you have made the greatest mistake a woman can make in thinking that you——" He paused as if putting sudden restraint upon himself.

"A mistake? Theo uncongenial?" On Selma's cheeks a flush bespoke shame of her slight disloyalty. "But you seem to think that you and I are congenial, and I don't understand you any better than the rest. Yesterday I asked you as nicely as I could to tell me the real things about yourself, to let me know you, so that——"

"You really want to know me? Do you? Do you, Selma?"

At his impetuous tone, at his use of her first name, she half turned on the seat to stare at him. The strange, hungry look of him warned her.

"But yesterday——" she faltered.

"This is to-day, and to-day is different. It is time for you to know me to-day, Selma, know me—*know* me to-day!"

Before she could realize or prevent, he had pulled down the side shades of the cab; his arms had grasped her; his face, suffering with the pent-up passion of a long-forced continence, was lowering. Then his lips claimed hers in a kiss whose deep-souled, absolute surrender no woman could doubt.

After the first amaze of it, Selma

forced him from her; reached out and snapped up the blinds; drew away, trembling and half sobbing, to the farther end of the seat. As he did not speak, did not move, she turned to look at him. He sat slumped forward, his face clasped in his hands, his shoulders shaking.

"You are wicked, *wicked* to have done that!" she exclaimed.

He raised himself and looked across at her.

"No," he said. "You invited it. We both wanted it. When two souls are in a kiss, it cannot be wicked."

"But my soul wasn't in it," she contended. "It was wicked, it was loathsome of you to——"

"Selma!" His hands stretched out toward her, not in violence, but with mute appeal.

She turned her gaze to the traffic of the street.

"There is something irreconcilable between us."

"By something irreconcilable you mean Theo?" He laughed a short, hard, intolerant laugh. "He's a good-enough chap, as men go, but you could never really love an ordinary-minded, unimaginative, obvious man, incapable of any appreciation of you. If he is the something between us——"

"It is not exactly Theo," she interrupted, although in a mere whisper. "It's Theo's trust in me. He wouldn't have believed this of me. That's all I saw when you—you kissed me—just Theo's unbelieving eyes."

"He'll believe soon," said Dunlap quietly. "He'll know it all—everybody will know—soon."

"Do you mean to suggest that I——"

"I mean to assert, Selma, that that kiss was the beginning of our life together. In just as few days as possible, I am leaving for the tropics, and you are going with me. Your life here with a man you do not love is indecent, and I—— Oh, you soft, shimmering, ap-

peeling woman child, I couldn't live without you!"

At sound of the ardor returning to his voice, Selma reached out and pressed the button that signaled the driver.

"We must get out of this cab. There is madness in it!" she exclaimed tremulously. "You must not, shall not, talk to me this way!"

As she leaned to speak the order through the small opening in the front window, however, Dunlap drew her aside and himself addressed the driver.

"To the Claremont," he said.

He forced Selma back into the seat, then withdrew his hands and smiled across at her gently.

"You needn't be afraid. I won't touch you again until you are ready; but I am going to talk to you. Even your vision of Theo's eyes, in this moving picture of ours, with that stupid trust which so unnerves you—stupid because born of a man's egoism—even Theo's trusting eyes shall not prevent my talking to you. Only you can prevent that. And you won't, because, having suffered through three years for the sake of your loyalty to one man, you have earned the right at least to hear what another has to offer. Be just, Selma. Remember that you are not entirely innocent of precipitating this scene. I intended to wait a little longer if I could. But you almost overcame my reserve yesterday, and now to-day——"

"I know, I know." Her eyes softened as she studied his pleading look. "I wanted to understand you, to—to 'know.' But I didn't want you to show me this way. I didn't dream——" She broke off, then added in a sudden access of indignation: "You must never speak of Theo again in the way you have! I won't listen to it! It's an old trick—a cheap trick to talk in that superior, depreciative way of a man who is not

present to defend himself. You are wrong to do it when he——"

"When he has trusted me to be with you?" inserted the engineer.

Selma threw back her head and regarded him through darkening, suspicious eyes.

"No, that's not it. I—I don't think Theo trusts you at all. But he does trust me. And somehow I can't bear to——"

"I see. I understand." Dunlap's voice seemed now quite under his control. "But you are not a child, and it is a grown woman's duty to look at both sides of the problems of her life. Whether you like the responsibility or not, Selma, I am one of the problems of your life."

The day was a precocious one of earliest spring. As they entered Central Park, that poetic, tender, nature-vast heart of octopus Manhattan, the air within the cab, as well as without, seemed to sweeten. Nothing was in bloom except occasional banks of pale-yellow forsythia, but they and the greening of the lawns suggested the new life about to burst in every tree and shrub. Feeling the influence of the day, Selma settled back into her furs and listened to Philip Dunlap as he talked.

On Riverside Drive at Ninety-third Street, he had the taxi halted that she might study the new Hyatt statue of Jeanne d'Arc, which she remarked had been unveiled since last she had passed that way. When they moved on, a spirit of wistfulness, inspired by that monument to the most heroic woman soul in history, filled Selma's breast with twinges of depreciation for her own frailty.

Past the tomb of Grant they drove slowly, and here Philip Dunlap ceased speaking and removed his hat. Down below them, the river glittered along in the sunlight, vital and strong under the countless burdens it bore. Equally

strong, equally vital, seemed Dunlap's talk.

When they were seated within the Claremont's glass-inclosed porch, at a table set for two, he proffered the menu, but she shook her head with a smile, glad to leave to him the details of this first meal they had ever eaten alone together. But her smile faded at the thought: "Alone at Theo's insistence!"

While he was engaged with the waiter, Selma's eyes turned to the view—to the Palisades, bold in their outlines; to the upstream sweep of the Hudson, wrestling in the grip of an incoming tide; to a blunt-nosed, fussy ferryboat that diverted the course of an immaculate white steam yacht.

Her thoughts strayed back to the statue of the hero woman. Why was it in her to feel such appreciation if she was really small? Was she capable of the courage of great impulses?

And between the service of that triumph of a luncheon, Philip Dunlap, his weary eyes sometimes claiming hers, but more often fastened on the river, so that only the fine lines of his profile showed—Philip Dunlap told her of his plans and his hopes.

A few days would see him on ship-board, headed south for Honduras, "the land of love." Business matters concerning the mine were coming to a head more rapidly than he had expected, and he was eager to begin his fight for power, for sure wealth. But in that land which he loved for its freedom, its throb of life, its warmth and sunlight and passion, he wanted more than power and sure wealth; he wanted happiness, completeness—Selma.

The absolutisms of modern conventions made more crimes than they prevented; he declared. For her even to consider cheating him of the fulfillment of a great love, to think of denying herself that fulfillment—for, whether she realized it yet or not, she craved him even as he did her, he repeatedly as-

sured her—for her to continue in an existence unclean because repugnant to her, all this was absolutely, hopelessly wrong. He knew that she would go with him when he went. He knew because he believed in her innate largeness and independence. Later, legal adjustment could be arranged. He deeply regretted the loss of her jewels and hoped that they would be recovered, but that was so small a consideration beside those which were driving him—and, with him, her.

Once the fervid look of the early part of their ride blotted the weariness from his eyes and his even tones broke in a passionate appeal.

"Hush—hush!" murmured Selma, trembling in spite of the public setting. "If my emeralds hadn't been stolen—if I were wearing some of them now, would you talk to me this way? You said, you remember, that emeralds safeguarded a woman's virtue."

Dunlap looked startled and for a moment stared across at her strangely. A deep red, as of offense, stained his tan.

"You don't need any emeralds to safeguard your virtue," he replied. "That I shall always value most of all in you—your virtue."

"I wish I could believe in that—in you!" Selma shuddered as she glanced down at the sun-silvered, treacherous flow of the river. "But I don't feel virtuous, even to have listened. I feel very shaken, very wicked. I don't know my own mind. You must leave it to me to find out. I wish you would send me home in a cab alone. And you must promise not to come to me until I send for you. I'll send when I know. I have listened, but I feel frightened and very unhappy. You'll promise that, won't you?"

Later, she did not know whether relief or regret at leaving him caused her paroxysm of weeping on that lonely ride back to the Washington Square apartment.

CHAPTER XVII.

Theodore Knox's expression was almost ecstatic as he entered his small private office from the larger one of the senior partner, where, for the better part of two hours, he had been in conference with Judge Strong and Colonel Cadwell. Before the interview, he had summoned his reserve of self-control, and he felt that in it he had shown considerable poise, seeming neither ungrateful nor too grateful over their congratulations, backed by a full-fledged partnership and a generous financial reward. In view of his important achievement and his years of faithful—yes, and successful service, he had no wish to appear surprised or effusive.

But out here in his own sanctum, with only his law diploma, his certificate of admission to the bar, and his well-thumbed books, to witness, he might exult to his surcharged heart's relief.

"At last! At last!" formed on his lips, as he placed the portfolio of papers he carried in a drawer and turned the key upon them. "Recognition has been a long time coming, but, thank Heaven, I've forced it before the basting threads are any thicker in my hair!"

From his pocket he took his check, gazed at its substantial figure with his crooked, boyish smile, then placed it upon his desk, where his gaze could easily encompass it. But his dark eyes soon preferred a photograph in a leather frame that stood behind his inkstand, a print that came as near as sepia could to doing justice to his wife's exquisiteness. His hand reached out and held it at close range.

"Ah, Selma, how pleased you would have been a short time ago!" his thoughts apostrophized. "I wonder how much it will mean to you now—this belated arrival of mine. Can it be that the croaking of pessimists is based on fact, that the things we want and work for come always too late?"

In his thoughts he thumbed over, as it were, the back pages of their third-year history. One thing impressed him as if in bold type. She had been restless and disappointed in him before that trip to the tropics from which they had hoped so much of readjustment—long before the moth who had seen her flame had followed them back to New York. Perhaps the firm's public recognition of him, and their consequent financial ease, would change her attitude more than had seemed probable of late.

The emeralds? It was too bad that she had to be deprived of them, even temporarily; too bad that she must suffer the loss of her capable servant. But the matter of the jewels could certainly be adjusted soon, and surely the failure of a mere maid need be no enduring tragedy in a crowded metropolis. Perhaps it would all come out right; perhaps the evil spell which so far had overcast that epoch year might yet be dispelled.

Five days had passed since, through his instrumentality, Octavia's young accomplice had joined her prison exile, sharing in the grilling to which they were daily subject, in the law's determination to break down the story that had reached consistency in its every detail. But shrewd as were the police officials, indefatigable as was Pembroke, the persistent, generous as was Selma in her promises of getting them off easily, not one incriminating admission had been forced, not one clew to the whereabouts of the stolen property had been gained.

A smile that was both grim and regretful brushed Theodore's face as he remembered the worn looks of the maid during their last interview and her obviously near approach to hysteria. Young Raynor, too, had been almost desperate in his reiterated denials and pleadings. Too bad, too bad that it had to be! Especially did he regret the circumstance on account of the strain on

Selma. She seemed immoderately depressed; had, in fact, looked ill the last few days and seemed to be staying as closely at home as she had previously been absent from it. Twice during his own few hours in the apartment of late, he had found her in tears; which overflow of emotion she had attributed to worry over the imprisonment of the maid.

The effect on Theodore himself of the entire complication had been to drive him more determinedly than ever into the intricacies of the legal case that he hoped would change his circumstances and, therefore, the situation. He had entered this morning's conference full of hope, for he knew that he had cut the "Gordon" knot; that, with the released cords, the banker could be fettered and bound; that the important marine combine might now be consummated in a way that would redound to the substantial credit of his firm.

But he had also carried into the "throne" room a realization that some anxious hours must pass before the possibilities he had created could become facts; before Spencer Gordon could be thrown into the hopper that grinds so surely, once it clutches a victim. Knowing how careful were these older corporation lawyers, how accurately they counted every possible slip, he had small hope that they would quaff his optimistic draft at once.

Evidently the case he had worked up against Gordon was stronger even than he had realized, for both Strong and Cadwell had seemed electrified by his statement of proof. Conservatives though they were, they had gloated openly over the triumph that they seemed to think was sure. And before he had left them, they had tendered him his great reward in advance.

Returning the photograph to its wonted place on the desk, he considered the most artful method of breaking his news to Selma. There was a certain

personal adornment which he intended to procure and give her to-night, and this must be attended to first in order that her surprise might be complete. Then, to round out the case against Spencer Gordon, he must visit the office of the United States district attorney, where he would probably be occupied an hour or two. At length he evolved a plan that pleased him. Taking up the telephone, he soon had his home number.

"Hello, treasure-trove. I'm speaking for one Theodore Knox, attorney-at-law, who requests the pleasure of Queen Selma's presence to-night at the finest repast that Gotham can produce on short notice. He will have some interesting news for her and something to give her. . . . No, it's not exactly a present, but something you'll be very glad to get. Where does your highness decree that we shall dine? . . . Wait a minute. I didn't get that. . . . Oh, I see, the Gordons. Well, if you ever dreamed what my good news is, you'd break one of your perpetual dinner engagements with them, especially when it's to be alone with them at their home. . . . But I don't want to tell you over the phone. I've set my heart on telling you to-night. . . . Certainly not. I never expect to enter their house again, and besides I want a little dinner with you *à deux*. . . . Let me think a moment."

Theodore asked the brief interim because, under the keen disappointment of Selma's evident reluctance, he felt his temper rising. In view of his open disapproval of her friendship for the banker and his wife, her frankness sounded flagrant. For his own part, he had consistently refused invitations there from the time the marine-combine case had been placed in his hands. He had a certain compunction about breaking bread with a man whom he was trying to overthrow. For him to join her there to-night was not to be considered.



Her face held its repose; her features were fine as a cameo in their creamy, brunet pallor, as, leaning slightly forward, she gave an absorbed attention to her companion.

He had allowed Selma to go, in the near past, chiefly through his policy of letting her have her own way. Knowing the blow that would surely fall within a day or two, however, could he afford to have her spend one more evening in their house?

The boyishly eager expression had quite disappeared from his face by the time he had reached his decision and returned to the wire.

"Selma," he said, "listen to me carefully. My firm is about ready to prove that Spencer Gordon is a crook in business. The news will be public property soon. I ask you to find some graceful way of breaking this engagement. Will you? . . . Well, then, Selma, dear, you force me to forbid you to go. . . . What? Now wait a minute and think! Remember that this is the first time in my life I have ever used that word to you. . . . Please, *please*, dear, take my judgment in this case! Yield this once, won't you?"

For some seconds after he knew that

the receiver at the other end of the line had found its place in the nicked Y, Theodore Knox sat staring at the mouthpiece before him, his jaw lax, his eyes blazing with resentment at the crisp, yet clearly furious defiance just voiced him by his wife. A month back he would not have believed that her delightful Southern accent could form to such insolent retort. Indeed, indeed, the woman must have changed! His good fortune must have come too late!

Stealthily, as if to avoid the surveillance of his eyes, his right hand moved along the desk and lifted the receiver from the hook. Then, realizing that he had been about to recall the home number, he again hung it up with a sharp click. His hand dropped on the desk, directly upon a note in a feminine hand that must have been laid there during his absence. He picked it up, slit it open, and began to read:

MY DEAR SENOR KNOX: I have your news that the case of my dower interest in the concession seems hopeless of recovery. If

they have shown-you the agreement, with my husband's signature undoubted, it must be as you say. I am disappointed, but it is all in the day.

I remain in your city some time yet. I have enjoyed so much the little visits from you. Señor Knox is a most kind man, but am I to see him no more since no longer he is my counselor? Why not the last kindness that he call upon me for the thanks that is his due? Gratefully, OLIVIA MENDEZ.

Again Theo's right hand reached for the receiver, but this time in no surreptitious way. The number he called was a different one, although he asked it also from memory. And the woman's voice that answered was a contrast to that other, with a hesitating accent—and very kind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Spencer Gordon felt and looked disgruntled as he stood at the buffet in his dining room measuring the ingredients that, after treatment in the silver shaker, would make a pair of Clover Clubs, his favorite cocktail. He had hoped much from the little dinner planned for that evening, when he would have a chance to entertain Selma Knox without the presence of the ubiquitous mining engineer. His disappointment had been keen, therefore, when Emily had telephoned him in the middle of the afternoon to say that her mother had fallen quite ill in her Albany home and that the evening's plans were necessarily disrupted. Appreciating the wealth of the maternal invalid and the practical tendencies of his wife's mind, he had realized at once the futility of trying to postpone the trip up the Hudson.

Having the evening on his hands and one of the super-excellent Gordon dinners ordered at home, he had decided to push certain other schemes in which he was interested by entertaining at home anyway. He was now awaiting the single guest whom he had himself invited.

Soon the distant chime of the doorbell announced an arrival, the butler received his grunted order, and Philip Dunlap, immaculate as always, entered from the hall.

In the arrival's easy manner there was no suggestion of the hope he felt, in accepting this last-moment invitation, that the banker was at last ready to commit himself regarding the mining proposition. In his voice sounded no hint of his desperation to push the issue. He must leave New York; he must take Selma Knox with him; therefore, he *must* have money.

The Clover Clubs mixed and poured, host and guest touched glasses, mumbled punctilious toasts, and disposed of the pretty drinks in two gulps. Then they tucked their knees under the Gordon mahogany, and the butler began the service of the elaborate meal ordered before circumstances had dictated Emily's sudden departure.

After the fashion of men who dine alone, they did not waste energy on conversation or test their blades of repartee. From the serving of the oysters, they talked business. By way of preface to the matter of vital importance, Dunlap reviewed the details of the mining proposition that he had made to Gordon.

"As you talk, it does sound attractive," said the banker, after all his questions, which he had seemed to improvise by special effort, had been answered satisfactorily. "In another week, perhaps, I may——"

While drinking his clear bouillon, Dunlap had been thinking rapidly. His business sense, which was keen, urged the danger of unduly pressing the deal. Yet when he thought of personal complications, he decided that he must take the plunge.

"It is the day that troubles me, Gordon," he interrupted. "I have a feeling that I ought to get back to the mine at once. One of the Fruit Line steam-

ers sails to-morrow afternoon, and I'd like to board her."

Gordon smiled tolerantly.

"You mining folks are great on playing hunches, aren't you? Well, why don't you sail? Before I go in as heavily as this deal seems to warrant, I'd have to run down to Honduras and look things over with my own eyes. I can surely get away within two or three weeks, and, if all is as you say, we can sign up just as well in Amapala as in New York. What's holding you back?"

With a sudden show of frankness, Dunlap looked his host in the eyes.

"A mere matter of money. I've been in New York longer than I expected, and I've had something of a fling. That means large expenses. To tell the irritating truth, I'm short of funds."

At the exultant, crafty look that crossed Gordon's face, he felt that he had misplayed. He added hastily:

"I have been a regardless spender for a man without a bottomless purse. But remember that a trustworthy mining engineer may easily be a poor personal financier."

"What do you want?" grunted the banker crassly.

"I don't like to ask a loan," continued Dunlap, unquestionably embarrassed, but driven by his predicament, "so I've drawn up an option on the mine. You'll find that the price and the division of interest are the same as we have practically agreed upon. The amount I need to carry me back to Honduras is not large."

He passed his host a typewritten sheet.

Gordon began to read in a mumbling tone:

"In consideration of the sum of two thousand dollars——" His pursy lips formed to a whistle of surprise, and he directed a quizzical glance across the board at his importunate guest. "Were you thinking of going back to Honduras

in a private yacht?" he asked with lumbbersome sarcasm.

"Not at all. The regular liner is good enough for me."

"But you need an entire deck to yourself, eh?" Gordon studied him; then laughed, although not unpleasantly. "Come across, you gay young blade, who is going with you?"

"I beg your pardon?" Dunlap's tone and the resentful set of his features were eloquent.

Gordon continued to study him, then laughed again, this time long and heartily.

"At last I get you, you fascinating soldier of fortune! Come across, now. There's no use denying the truth to your Uncle Dudley. You're planning to take Selma Knox with you to your haven of outlawed love. You needn't bother lying. Your face, well trained as it is, has given you away. And you ask me to pay the freight! Ha, ha! That is rather a joke!"

"A joke—in what way?" stammered Dunlap.

Spencer Gordon's continued laughter began to rasp.

"The point of the joke lies in my own interest in our dainty ash blond," he at last admitted. "You see, while I look fat and harmless enough, I'm something of a villain myself. Now, here's my side of the proposition, Dunlap. While not anxious to deprive myself of my present chance meetings with the lady of our mutual—that's good, eh?—our mutual love, I might have reasons for helping you achieve this present adventure, if you come across clean with the answers to a few questions. In the first place, will the other woman let you take her?"

Every line of the engineer's back met his chair, so suddenly straight did he sit at the shock of this query.

"I had hoped, Gordon, that you had a better opinion of me than that!" he exclaimed. "I have never violated your

hospitality. There is no attachment whatever—not even a platonic one—between Mrs. Gordon and myself. I have considered you a friend, and she is *your* wife, isn't she?"

Wheezing from his continued risibilities, the banker brought down his heavy fist upon the table with a force that made the china and silver protest.

"Oh, I say, this is good! So you've been playing the gallant to my missus, too, eh? Well, I wish you joy of any response you can get from that statue of calculation! And there's not even platony between you because she's my wife? Oh, lordy, lordy! Whose wife do you think Selma is—say?"

"That is different," cried Dunlap, his mind very busy. "You have made your wife a happy and contented woman, so that any man would be a scoundrel who tried to come between you. But Knox—what has that lame excuse of a husband done for Selma? She is utterly wretched, and certainly he deserves no consideration."

"But *your own other woman?*" persisted Gordon. "Isn't she liable to make trouble? Oh, don't bother denying her to me, young man! I'm not guessing, although it wouldn't be a far-fetched guess in the case of a moving-picture hero like you. I always look up anybody who tries to do business with me. It happens that I've had you and your past thoroughly investigated, both here and in the tropics. Tell me, has Selma Knox consented to go with you?"

For a moment the two men stared at each other with glances as hard as steel. Then the younger threw back his head and answered defiantly:

"She will go."

The banker plumped his elbows on the table and made a frame for his heavy jowl with his hands. He seemed to be pondering the situation deeply. At last a strange smile announced that he had reached a decision.

"I am going to take up this option, Dunlap," he said.

Relief lit the face of the engineer. With a deep inhalation that expressed the same emotion, his figure eased in his chair.

"And I'm going to be perfectly frank with you," continued Gordon. "I'm going to tell you exactly what I think of you and why I'm advancing you two thousand dollars with which to elope with Selma Knox."

Dunlap's stare intensified; otherwise he made no protest. The banker held the whip hand; rather, the check book on which his dearest plan seemed to depend.

"First off, you're a scamp with the blackest heart I've ever seen unbarred."

The host's manner was one of continued enjoyment. Angry red flared through Dunlap's tan.

"Hold your temper, now! You can't afford to lose it!" commanded Gordon. "Remember that I'm buying the right to express a few opinions of you, and you get plenty of admiration from the women. My reasons for the purchase are as follows: Knox has been making no end of trouble for me and wants to checkmate the slickest deal I ever tried to drive through the Street. I owe him all the misery I can make him, and by helping you deprive him of his wife—a mental lightweight, but dearly beloved—I hope I am paying him in part. Ah, my friend, allow me to anticipate your comment on my inconsistency! What I have said is perfectly true—that I, too, am ensnared by the charms of this same bit of human Dresden. But the only way she can ever mean anything to me is through having been dragged out of respectability and matrimony by some scapegrace like you. Later, when you have tired of her, or she of you, will come my reward. You'll not be able to marry her. Fortunately I know enough to govern that. And you'll not be able to hold her long; she's weak, but too

white for you. What's more, I'm not really going to pay for acting as cat's-paw. When you get to Honduras, see to it that you put the mine in shape, so that I'll be anxious to take up this option. If you don't— Well, just remember that I know about the other woman!"

Drawing a check book and a fountain pen from his pocket, he wrote out a draft on the Taplock National, a bank of which he confessed himself president, signed it, and passed it across the table.

A summons to the telephone called him away at the moment and relieved Dunlap of the necessity of speech.

After five minutes, Gordon waddled back, an expression on his face which the younger man did not understand, so conflicting was it through irony, excitement, and mirth.

"You certainly hit upon the psychological moment for your touch, Dunlap," he observed, after resuming his chair. "The call was from Psycho Pembroke. The poor boob seems really to have detected something at last! I gave him instructions, and he will report here as soon as he has carried them out. You'd better wait and enjoy developments."

CHAPTER XIX.

Alone in the home apartment, Selma Knox sat idly in the antique brocaded rocker. Never in her life had she felt so lonely, so utterly wretched. An element of grievance entered her mood, for, being in a way estranged from all her small world—husband, lover, friends—she had no human outlet for her pent-up emotions.

Silently she swayed, inciting the old-fashioned chair to move from toe to heel of its rockers, from heel to toe. Under such exertion it had a way of traveling, a characteristic that presently brought her within range of the pier glass. The petulant face that it reflected

for her inspection was something of a shock to her vanity. She rose and approached for a closer examination.

"How wearing a mental disturbance is!" she thought. "You look positively plain to-night, Selma Knox. If you don't come to some decision soon—"

No lack of attention to her toilet caused the deterioration in her appearance, she commented further; it was simply that wretchedness was unbecoming. She had dressed for her all-alone little meal as she had intended to dress for the Gordon dinner, in a décolleté gown whose vague pinkish mauve usually brought out her coloring delightfully. But to-night she looked gray in it, actually old. Although she had of necessity prepared her own dinner, she had dressed deliberately, for Emily's message withdrawing her invitation had reached her early in the afternoon.

Why had she dressed with such care, she asked herself. For whom? She tucked in a frivolously straying strand of her pale hair and turned away from the mirror. Certainly she neither wished nor expected to see Philip Dunlap, any more than she did Theo, at the thought of whom she felt a rush of anger. What was the result of her solitary days of feeling, for she had long ago given up the effort at logical thought? Despite the fact that each night she had gone to sleep enjoining her subconscious mind to work out the personal problem that had proven too obscure for her consciousness, no enlightenment had come with her awakenings. She felt listless, disappointed in herself, powerless. She must decide, she adjured herself. She must decide and strongly. She must not permit herself to be the plaything of the little drama's next developments. If she had a mind and a heart, why couldn't she know them as other women did? Why not send for Dunlap to-night and at least discuss the matter with him? But with the mental query, she shook her

head emphatically. She realized that she was not going to do that.

It would have been better—it would have been only right and fair—for her to have spent the evening with Theo, since he had asked it. But she had tried to get him at the office immediately on hearing from Mrs. Gordon. Her anger had cooled, and she had felt nervous over the effect on him of her rebellion. He had not been there and she had been unable later to locate him at any of his known haunts—the Harvard Club, the Bar Association, or the downtown law library. A little ache caught her heart. At least he might have had the patience to try her again! If he were the Theo he used to be, he would have telephoned a second time to see if she had not exercised the prerogative of her sex. But intensely as she had listened for the jangle of the bell, there had been no call. And the line was not out of order, for twice she had called the exchange to make sure. What could be the good news of which he had spoken? What the present he was to have given her?

Hard on the silence, the knocker sounded. Perhaps never, in its antique career as a herald of events, had it aroused greater excitement or indecision than filled Selma. Should she answer it? It could not be Theo, for he would not knock. It might be, it probably was—

Quite calmly, she walked to the door and opened it. The expansive figure of Professor Pembroke stood without.

Evidently he had hastened up the two flights of stairs, for he was still seeking his breath with labored gasps. Hiding her astonishment and—yes, her disappointment as best she might, Selma greeted him and invited him in.

"So pleased, Mrs. Knox—so pleased," he began, still breathing heavily, "to find you at home. Probably you felt that I was coming. I tried to project the news to you

psychically and felt that you had received it. Pardon the personality, but how beautiful you look!"

Selma started, although not with indignation. Was Pembroke, then, the cause of her feeling of elation, of her elaborate toilet? Had she indeed received the wireless message of his mind?

Pembroke reached out and seized one of her hands in his two plump members.

"You poor, lonely wife!" he murmured sympathetically. "I come to you with sad tidings to-night. No, nothing about the emeralds. It is regarding your jewel of a husband this time. You must prepare yourself for a shock."

Selma released her hand and took a step backward to stare at the informer. At the mention of Theodore, all her instincts sprang to his defense.

"You must not bring me tales against my husband when he is not here," she said, frowning savagely. "He was forced to dine alone to-night."

"To dine alone?" Pembroke smiled insinuatingly. "Ah, how sweet, how pitiful, is the faith of woman! To think that you, with your germinating powers, should be so deceived! Your husband, my poor, faithful little heart, is dining to-night with another woman."

"Another woman?" murmured Selma. "If that is true, she must be one of our mutual friends."

The pale eyes of the psychologist regarded her with waxing pity and his head wagged dismally.

"How wonderful, how divine, is such faith!" he ejaculated in a guttural voice; then added, as if with reinforced determination: "No matter how my heart bleeds for you, my ruling passion for right and truth forces me to discourage you in any hope that the lady is a mutual friend. She is not the mutual sort. I have been watching your husband's moves closely of



Mastered by his mania for the woman in his arms, tortured into excess by her resistance, Dunlap did not hear the faint grating of a latchkey in the door.

late, for—well, for good and sufficient reasons, and am convinced that this lady, although of great beauty and charm, is one you could not know. She has visited him frequently at his office and he her at her place of abode. If you could see——”

“Beautiful, is she? He—he visits her?” Selma’s interruption had a startled sound.

“Only seeing is believing, madame. They are dining in a smart hotel just

across the park. Why don’t you throw on a wrap and let me take you over, just to satisfy your own eyes?”

“Me spy on Teddy!” Selma threw back her head, indignation taking any odium of grayness from her cheeks. “Why, I wouldn’t for anything in the world have him know that I——”

“But, my dear child, he need not know. You owe it to yourself, to your rich womanhood, to acquaint yourself with the truth. This is the turning

point in your mental health. By all means, be thorough. I shall find a way for you to observe him unobserved. Trust in the judgment of those who are older and wiser than you that——"

"Those older and wiser?" demanded Selma.

"Yes, poor child. Another sincere friend of yours, in the person of Mr. Spencer Gordon, has suspected the deplorable truth for some time and—ah—agrees with me that a heroic cure is best. Come, put on an inconspicuous hat and coat and let's be off!"

Wondering at the hurting, sinking sensations within her, Selma found herself doing as she was bid. During the walk across the park, she could not bring herself to talk; in fact, did not half listen to the professor's reassurances and instructions. Arrived at the popular dining place that he had named, he arranged that she should be seated at an obscure, palm-screened table; then, declaring it inadvisable for him to be seen with her, he prepared to depart. His preparations consisted of the promise to await her pleasure outside, of reiterated warnings that she must not make a scene there or confront her recreant husband until after they had consulted, of the very stealthy indication of a certain table in an opposite corner of the room.

With sensations that she never afterward forgot, Selma Knox stared, from under the protection of the crêpe veil she had draped about her hat, at the couple whom she had been brought to inspect. The woman she recognized instantly as the mysterious beauty of the *Caribbean*, she who had bowed so pleasantly to Philip Dunlap in the Astor corridor. She wore a gown of simple black to-night, but wore it with the grace that seemed to distinguish everything she donned. The lace of it was cut away at the throat, around whose slender base glittered a jeweled necklace. Unlike the animated American

women around her, she was not chattering, not laughing, not gesticulating. Her face held its repose; her features were fine as a cameo in their creamy, brunet pallor, as, leaning slightly forward, she gave an absorbed attention to her companion.

And Theo—when had she seen him so good looking, so happy looking? Their dinner seemed only to have begun, for the waiter was removing the clam-cocktail cups, and Theo was deep in the possibilities of the menu, glancing up frequently to consult the tastes of his vis-à-vis.

An impulse of enraged realization almost brought Selma to her feet, but she clutched the table before her and only stared the harder. So this was the obvious-minded husband whom she had pitied! And this was the purse whose emptiness had caused her such worry and humiliation! And those—those were the dark, adoring, reproachful eyes that had kept herself and Philip Dunlap apart! She, secure in her own vanity, had believed in him! But certainly she could choose, for herself now, without any sense of obligation. She would hurry home, collect her personal belongings, and then——

But wait! There was plenty of time. She might as well see enough of the playlet while she was here. What in the tropical siren's attire had caught Theo's attention—or was it only that he was in the habit of touching her? He had laid aside the menu, and now, with a strange expression, stretched out his hand and lifted the jeweled circlet about her neck. The woman smiled into his eyes and showed him a bracelet she wore that matched the neck piece.

Selma's heart gave one startled leap, then seemed to stop beating. What was it about that necklace that had caught her attention at first sight of the woman? Why was she able to see the unique setting so accurately, even across the great space of the room?

What did the green shimmer from its jewels mean to her?

Then she saw Theo produce from his pocket a small plush case and talk earnestly to the woman, as if persuading her. From the case he took a limp circlet of gold, caught her left hand, and clasped it about the arm that was bare of ornament.

The new bracelet matched the other! It also sparkled wickedly with green in the shaded candlelight! They all were hers, hers, Selma's—the bracelets, the necklace! They were the disappearing emeralds!

CHAPTER XX.

Selma pulled the crêpe veil closer about her face, got uncertainly to her feet, and slipped out to the corridor. There she found Pembroke waiting, a beam upon his fat-flattened features which impressed her as more anticipatory than sympathetic.

At her own door, she told him good night somewhat abruptly, stating that she preferred to work out alone the problem he had thrust upon her.

Within the apartment, the antique rocker looked as if it had been waiting for her. She sank into it, her body as listless as her mind was active.

So he had really taken the emeralds, and taken them, not to provide money for her, but to buy the favor of another woman! The bracelet that he had given her to-night, could that have been the "present," the one little piece that, probably in a repentant mood that afternoon, he had spoken of giving to her? If so, her scorn of his dinner invitation had returned it to its mates and him to the new love.

How impossible it all seemed that Teddy, with his years of consistency behind, with his ingenuous manner and his frank expression, should turn out to be a lie and a cheat! And more than in his treachery to her did he prove

himself without scruples in his attitude toward Octavia and her lover. He allowed two people whom he knew to be innocent to suffer behind bars, while he presented the stolen jewels, a piece at a time, to his creature!

Fury seized Selma. She got to her feet and began to pace the room. She longed to confront him with her loathing. She longed to scream his treason to all her world.

Meantime, Professor Pembroke had hastened northward and been admitted to the Gordon house.

Some five minutes after his entry, Philip Dunlap emerged. His descent of the steps to the street indicated hurry. His instructions to the chauffeur of the taxi that panted at the curb imbued that worthy with an emulative ambition.

No further hesitation did the engineer feel about breaking his promise of not seeking Selma until she sent. The news that Pembroke had just brought to Gordon was ample excuse. Undoubtedly she needed him as she never had done before. Unquestionably the moment for him to take command had arrived.

But the Selma who admitted him was different from any of his past visions of her. Superbly calm, quiet with the hovering quiet of tragedy, her eyes almost opaque in their dullness, she greeted him without surprise.

"You are a wonderful woman, Selma, far more wonderful than I thought!" he declared with emotion, after he had followed her into the den. "You are brave."

"Brave?" she repeated. "No. No, I don't think I am brave."

"Most women would have gone to pieces after seeing what you have just seen," he insisted. "You are meeting the crisis of a husband's perfidy like a Spartan. You are ready now, I am sure, to let me plan your future."

"You—you know?" Selma's query

was accompanied by a glance of blue-edged resentment.

"Pembroke reported to us at once after bringing you here."

"To us?"

"To Gordon and me. We have long suspected that your naïve Theodore was wearing a mask. I wanted to know the truth for your protection. Gordon needed to know for his own."

"And just what is this truth you have discovered?"

"Why—why, another woman is the germ of it." Dunlap stared into her strange, hostile eyes. "Isn't that enough for a wife of your class?"

"Then——"

But Selma's ejaculation ended with the one word. "Then you do not know about the emeralds?" she had been about to exclaim. But something domineering within her, of which she had not taken account, rose up and clipped her speech. "You must protect Theo from these outsiders," the new power cautioned. "He would stand by you if you were in danger. You must not let them suspect his double-dealing about the jewels."

"Selma, what is it?" Dunlap stepped closer and gazed down into her face.

"I was about to ask," she said listlessly, "if you had any idea who she is—this woman that he dined with to-night."

"What does that matter? No, I didn't wait to hear any details from Pembroke beyond the salient one that at last you know. Selma"—he put a hand beneath her chin and upturned her face toward his—"what does this apathetic attitude mean? You are so strange with me. I have come to think for you and plan for you. You must be spared the humiliation of seeing Knox again, of speaking with him, I want you to leave this apartment to-night—at once, before he returns."

"Leave at once?" murmured Selma, her eyes meeting his with an inquiring,

impersonal gaze. "Where would I go?"

"Trust the details to me—all except your own preparations. Come, Selma!"

His hand slipped to her shoulder, and he shook her slightly.

"A steamer sails for Central American ports at three to-morrow. I have arranged my business affairs so that we can leave then."

He paused. She stood quiet, seemed to be thinking.

"Don't think of what you are leaving," he hurried on. "Think of the life ahead in Honduras—a clean, decent life, with woman's only self-respect, love, as its foundation."

Again she interrupted with a monosyllable.

"Decent?" she asked.

"Selma, Selma, surely you don't doubt me or my love for you?" In Dunlap's voice was a vital ring of pain. "Why, you are life, love, everything, to me! Your slightest sigh shall be a law to me. Afterward, when a divorce is possible, we will satisfy the conventions by a marriage that will be a true union of two hearts and souls. Why hurt me with your hesitation? You love me——"

"Do you think I do?" she demanded.

"Do I *think*?" Dunlap stepped back a pace in his disappointment. Then impulse conquered him. He grasped her as he had done in the cab and crushed her to him, his lips finding hers and imploring her passion.

"Do I think? I know—I *know*!" he murmured disconnectedly. "No man could love as I love you and not compel a return! Oh, Selma, I am mad for you—mad for you! To-morrow is an eternity away! Kiss me, Selma! Ah, my dear, don't shrink from me, don't fear me! Again! Again!"

Mastered by his mania for the woman in his arms, tortured into excess by her resistance, Dunlap did not

hear the faint grating of a latchkey in the door. It was only when Selma, with a gasp of warning, wrenched herself away, that he realized the energetic footsteps approaching through the hall. With a black frown, he turned to face the interruption.

Selma, shaken and white, grasped a near-by chair for support.

In another second both found themselves staring into Theodore Knox's cheerful smile. Pausing a moment on the threshold, as if in surprise, the newcomer nodded to the engineer, then caught and pressed his wife's hand.

"I scarcely hoped to find you at home," he said to her, with no shadow of their afternoon's quarrel in his manner. "The Gordon dinner couldn't have been as well cooked as usual."

Dunlap glanced at Selma; then, in pity, took the reply upon himself.

"Mrs. Gordon called the dinner off at the last moment. Her mother is ill. I dropped in a few minutes ago to see how you good people were faring. I was just going."

"Well, I'm glad I arrived before you left, for I have some news," responded Theo genially. "We must all be at police headquarters at ten to-morrow morning. Octavia and her light-fingered sweetheart are due for arraignment in court, and Commissioner Howard intends to make one more valiant effort to break down their story. He especially wants you present, Dunlap, to remind Raynor that you saw him in the apartment the day the emeralds vanished."

"I'll be there, of course. And as ten is an early hour for any person who looks as tired as Mrs. Knox does, I'll say good night."

The engineer stooped to gather his gloves from the couch. Looking up, he saw Selma's eyes fixed on him in a sort of terror. She was still ghastly white, still trembling. He smiled upon

her as reassuringly as he could and his lips formed to the word, "To-morrow."

When Theodore returned to the den from escorting the caller to the door, he found Selma collapsed among the cushions of the couch in a paroxysm of weeping such as he had never witnessed before.

"Why, Selma, what is it? What is wrong?" he cried.

A wail formed into words from her rasping, choking sobs.

"I don't love him! I never did—I never could! I hate him! I hate him!"

"But, treasure, why feel so bad about it? You're not supposed to love anybody but——"

"Not you! Don't say you!" She sprang to her feet and faced him, her eyes streaming, a tigerish readiness for activity in her pose. "How could I love you when I loathe you? I don't need to love anybody!"

The husband straightened as if he had been physically struck. Without a protest, he watched her whirl about and hurry down the hall into the rose-colored bedroom. He heard her turn the key in the lock.

After trying to read an hour or two, Theodore composed himself for sleep on the couch. But several times he rose and tiptoed along the hall to listen at the bedroom door. When at last the hysterical woman within seemed to fall asleep from sheer exhaustion, he turned out the reading lamp. The darkness covered the grimmest smile that had ever distressed his features.

CHAPTER XXI.

When, promptly at ten o'clock next morning, Selma and Theodore Knox entered the outer office of the deputy commissioner of police, Philip Dunlap was already there. He nodded to Knox and pressed Selma's hand.

"Now for the last act in the tragedy of the emeralds!" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps it will prove more of a farce," offered Theodore, in a detached manner.

Selma made no comment. Her eyes sought the floor. Indeed, in the bitterness of her realization, there seemed nothing to say. Evidently Theo was going through with the false accusation. She felt as if she could not endure to witness this last arraignment of the two young people, who, although guilty of small derelictions, had not taken her jewels, were not guilty of the graver crime for which they were about to be punished on circumstantial evidence. Yet, caught as she was by the impulse of flight, she quelled it with the stern reminder that she must be present to see and hear Theo blast himself forever out of her respect, and herself demand justice for Octavia and young Raynor.

She glanced at Dunlap. He was shaking his head over the husband's suggestion.

"Even in 'comedy, the guilty are punished," he said.

Knox crossed the room to a desk, at which a fatherly-looking policeman sat guard. With a pencil, he added his wife's name to his card and asked that it be taken at once to Deputy Howard.

Philip Dunlap seized the opportunity for an aside with Selma.

"I have the tickets here." He tapped the breast pocket of his coat. "At three the steamer sails."

Any reply on her part was interrupted by the bustling entrance of Professor Pembroke. His countenance was benign; his plump palms rubbed together.

"Why such flags of joy?" asked Theodore, rejoining the group.

"My theories of psychic deflection are about to be vindicated in the eyes of all of you," declared the professor with assurance. "All morning I've been projecting thoughts of confession into the minds of our two prisoners. One or the

other of them will surely break down, once they come within range of my eyes."

"Commissioner Howard will see you at once," said the doorman, motioning them toward the inner office.

As they entered, the police official ceased reading, dropping the opened newspaper in his hands over the flat top of his desk, and hurried to greet them.

"I have good news for you, Mrs. Knox—the very best," he declared, beaming upon the beautiful matron.

"Good news? The best?" she echoed, wonder catching her because of her secret knowledge of the truth.

"They have already confessed—what did I tell you?" chortled Pembroke. "This is marvelous—a truly wonderful and expeditious demonstration of the possibilities of thought projection."

"They have not confessed," corrected the deputy dryly, "but we have recovered the emeralds to the last stone. Come and see!"

As he stepped back to his desk, Selma followed, her mind struggling for logical thought. Had Theo, then, repented at this eleventh hour, she demanded of herself. Or had he quarreled with his inamorata and recovered his gifts?

Philip Dunlap alone held back, his manner easy, his expression one of incredulity.

Howard removed the newspaper covering from his desk top, where, indeed, the missing emeralds lay spread, necklace, bracelets, earrings, brooches, girle—every piece of the collection.

In spite of herself, Selma turned first to her husband and, well as she knew him, was astonished by the exultant smile with which he met her gaze.

"A surprise, isn't it, treasure?" he exclaimed.

"Something tells me it was the woman who broke down first," inserted Pembroke with enthusiasm. "From

the beginning, I have coped especially with her."

Howard smiled at him queerly.

"It was a woman, yes," he admitted. "Bring her in, officer." His order was addressed to the uniformed man in the background.

None of them noticed the startled glance that Dunlap fixed on Theodore, nor the fact that he stepped behind a heavy chair and firmly gripped its back. The eyes of all were upon the door.

As this was thrown wide by the attendant, Madame Mendez swept into the room, her bearing superb. Her blazing gaze swept the group, then settled upon the engineer. As she looked, a strange smile hardened, rather than beautified, the lines of her mouth.

"Suppose you tell us, madame, how the Knox emeralds came into your possession," suggested the deputy commissioner, placing her a chair.

Sinking into it, she moistened her lips, then complied:

"I received them certain days ago from Señor Dunlap. He tells me that he have brought them from Honduras to arrange for their sale, but that such negotiations have been delayed and he considers they will be safer with me. He instructs me not to wear them or show them to any person. But last night— Well, I am displeased with that fine gentleman for some time now, so I wear the necklace and one bracelet when I dine with Señor Knox, my counselor. He is the only honest lawyer and honest man I ever have known, and he has been most kind about a legal trouble I take to him. I think only to make myself attractive, so that he will not be ashamed of me.

"But the great surprise awaited both myself and Señor Knox. He show amazement when he see the jewels that I wear; then he take something from his pocket. I exclaim with astonishment as he clasp it on my wrist, and I see that in all ways it matches the one

on my other arm. Then I learn to my sorrow that I am what you call the receiver of stolen goods and in danger of arrest unless I give over the jewels to the police. That I do at once, as you know. I am an unhappy woman, but an honest one—always."

"And will you tell us, madame, how Mr. Dunlap came to leave such valuable property with you?"

"Why should I not?" she demanded with spirit. "He is my husband."

The commissioner turned suddenly upon Dunlap, who still stood, like a handsome bronze, behind the chair.

"Have you anything to say?"

"Not to you. I think you know enough," replied the engineer curtly.

Howard motioned to the policeman.

"Take him downstairs!" he commanded.

"Just one moment," inserted Madame Mendez. "I have certain things to say to Señor Dunlap. May I speak with him aside, Meester Commissioner?"

Her smile made refusal impossible.

Dunlap walked over to the farthest corner of the room and turned expectantly. The woman from the tropics followed and, gripping his arm, talked to him rapidly, in guarded tones, although none showed curiosity over what was passing between them.

Knox and Howard were deep in a discussion of their own. Professor Pembroke was developing certain self-respecting theories for the benefit of Selma, who, however, did not even pretend to be listening. She sat hunched and trembling in her chair, too dazed for any consecutive thought.

Soon the two turned back to the group.

"You understand that there is not a word of it true," they distinctly heard Dunlap say, "but I must play up your idea strongly or it won't get over."

He addressed Theodore with an easy smile.

"On consideration, Knox, you will



Howard removed the newspaper covering from his desk top, where, indeed, the missing emeralds lay spread.

decide, I feel sure, not to press this charge against me."

The lawyer gasped.

"Consideration of what, pray?"

"Of your wife—your emerald without a flaw." Dunlap bowed with exaggerated respect toward Selma. "By stopping action against me, you will save her from starring in a savory scandal. If you let them push the case, I'll shout out a defense that is bound to reach the newspapers."

"Your defense—what do you mean?" This time Commissioner Howard put the astonished query.

Selma's eyes showed blue flames as she turned them full upon him. The dark ones of the Central American woman, however, beamed on him, as if with pride in his sang-froid.

"The truth of this difficulty is that Mrs. Knox urged me to help myself to

her property to raise funds for our elopement, so that it was not larceny for me to——"

"How dare you?"

Selma sprang toward him with the outraged cry.

But her husband pressed her back into her chair with the caution:

"Let's hear him out, treasure. It won't change the facts any. And so, Dunlap?"

"When the hue and cry was raised that the apartment had been robbed," continued Dunlap imperturbably. "I turned the jewelry over to my wife. She, in the meantime, got wind of my very attractive little adventure with Mrs. Knox and was jealous. She declared she would not return the emeralds until we were safely back in Honduras together. As I needed the five thousand that I hoped to realize from

the sale of them for my share of a promising investment, I let her keep them and raised money for my immediate expenses by giving Spencer Gordon an option on my mining property. Oh, I don't mind being perfectly frank about it, for there's no doubt I'm in a hole. Gordon will testify that I intended to leave New York with Mrs. Knox at three to-day, for, to raise the cash, I had to tell him of my success with the lady. Here are the steamship tickets that we intended to use. Don't you see that I can beat any charge you may bring?"

At his superb impertinence, Selma broke from her husband's restraint.

"Oh—oh, what a cad he is!" she cried, almost inarticulate in her anger. "I knew nothing of the theft of the emeralds. Why, they belong to my husband, not to me! And I never agreed to go away with him! I listened—in that I was wicked, I know—but I wasn't going to go! Didn't I tell you last night, Theo, how I hated him?"

"Of course you didn't—and of course you did," soothed Theo. "I had no idea he had gone so far as this. I suppose this is the best possible curtain for all concerned, not excepting public justice. Not even the satisfaction of giving Dunlap what he deserves could compensate for the publicity of such a defense."

"It does look like the best way out for you, Knox," advised Howard. "Officially I know of no charge against Dunlap, so, unless you make a complaint, he is free to go—of course, to go out of New York."

Theodore turned to the engineer.

"I agree to your proposition, Dunlap, on one condition—that you take your own wife with you on that three-o'clock steamer to-day—that is, if she is willing to go."

"I thank you." Madame Mendez-Dunlap smiled upon him with obviously real appreciation. "You must not pity

a wife whose eyes are opened, Señor Knox. He have failed to win your wife; I have failed to win you. We go away together and console. I regret to have deceived you concerning that widowhood, but I had fear that if my second marriage was known, it would spoil my case of the concession. Now, alas, it seem that I have no case at all!" She shrugged her shoulders and sent a fleeting smile about the group. "I bid you all farewell," she continued brightly. "Our trouble has not been in vain, for I have learn' my husband. From now he must behave like a better man."

Philip Dunlap made no attempt to throw off the gentle grip of her hand on his arm. But her influence was not shown in the despairing glance he directed into Selma's eyes just before they passed through the door.

CHAPTER XXII.

The moment's silence that followed the departure of the Dunlaps was broken by Professor Pembroke.

"My sixth sense tells me that a certain smooth-tongued rascal is going to get his. Did you see the supermanful look she gave him? I've seen jails that I'd prefer to——"

The calm stare of Commissioner Howard interrupted him.

"We won't need your psychic deductions longer," said the official. "I scarcely need add that this case is not to be discussed. Good morning, professor."

Pembroke jerked out his watch, glanced at it, then sprang for his hat.

"I had no idea it was so late—and I must prepare my address for the Nietzsche Circle by two. Sorry to leave you, but I must be off. Good morning, all!"

Despite the tension of the scene through which they had just passed, the three could not repress a companionable smile.

"To think of that fat dub——" Theo paused; then turned whimsically to the deputy. "Say, what would you do, Howard, if psycho-analysis got started in your home."

Selma's face was the first to stiffen into gravity.

"What—what is to happen to Octavia now?" she asked.

"Our mental expert was not entirely wrong in his prophecy of a confession, although I didn't dare tell him, for he'd never have gone," reported Howard. "The girl came through to the matron this morning. It seems that she had been persuaded by young Raynor to embark on a partnership in crime as the shortest cut to an affluence that would permit them to marry. Your apartment was to have been her first job, and you would have missed your silver and small articles within a day or two after employing her had she not glimpsed the emeralds and their hiding place."

"She seemed so very honest at first," mourned Selma. "I never would have suspected one as gentle as Octavia."

"It was the prospect of so large a haul that caused delay," continued the police executive. "It was necessary for Raynor to locate a fence that would handle such swag. The day you saw her signal him with the blind, Mrs. Knox, they intended to lift the emeralds. But when they finally got to the secret drawer, it was empty."

"I see," murmured Knox. "Dunlap had beaten them to it."

"But the girl," insisted Selma, "hasn't she been punished enough? She is very young and can't be hardened to crime."

"I haven't a doubt that if you and Mr. Knox care to ask the magistrate for clemency in her behalf, she will draw a suspended sentence. Raynor's case is different. There is no question that he was trying to make a thief out of her. Besides, he has broken his

parole and must go back to Elmira for a second dose of reform."

So it came about that, after a hasty luncheon, the Knoxes repaired to the magistrate's court, where, after some delay, the case was called and their plea in the servant's behalf granted.

"It is nearly three o'clock," said Theo when they were once more on the street. "I have an appointment at the Federal Building that will take perhaps an hour. Then I want to have a little talk with you, Selma. Will you meet me at my office at four?"

"Nearly three o'clock!" Selma shuddered and glanced up at him appealingly. "Can't I come with you and wait in one of the outer offices? I—I don't want to be alone."

They boarded a street car and soon entered the antiquated structure facing City Hall Park that houses the general post office, Federal courts, and offices. There seclusion was found where Selma could await the completion of the "important business" that commanded her husband's presence.

He sat beside the United States district attorney when Spencer Gordon was brought in under arrest for misusing the funds of the Taplock National, the bank of which he was president. When the bail question had been settled, the crooked financier turned in crass rage upon Knox.

"I suppose I've got you to thank for this!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed you have, Gordon." The Federal attorney took the answer upon himself. "If it had not been for the information that Mr. Knox set before us, you probably would have got away with the rawest piece of banking manipulation that has ever come to my notice."

The banker managed a scornful laugh as he pulled out his watch.

"Well, there's satisfaction that his good turn is already repaid. Let's see. It's three-forty-five. While he's been

busying himself with other people's affairs, a certain ship has set sail for Honduras. On it——"

"That will do, Gordon!" interrupted Theodore, facing him with a dangerous glare.

Almost at once, however, his face relaxed into its wonted genial lines. He stepped to the half-opened door of an inner office, threw it wide, and called:

"I'm ready, Selma."

On the short walk to the building of his own law office, Theodore explained to his wife the unlawful source of the funds that Gordon had used in trying to block the coastwise shipping deal, to the success of which his firm was committed.

Inside, as they approached the suite occupied by Strong & Cadwell, they saw that a sign painter was at work on the ground glass of the entrance door. The last word of a new lettering was just being completed as they arrived.

"Strong, Cadwell & Knox!" read Selma aloud.

For an unprecedented time the new partner closed the door of his private room. Within, detailed, downright consultation was under way.

"But how in the world," asked Selma, in its midst, "did you happen to have the odd bracelet in your possession?"

A shadow crossed Theo's face.

"That," he said, "I borrowed and pawned early in the game to raise cash for your needs. I hated to do it, even temporarily, but——"

"But why did you want me to have the new dresses and things," interrupted Selma, "if you saw my—my affair with Dunlap all along and were really jealous?"

"'Really' is a feeble word, treasure-trove. I was constantly, horribly, ach-

ingly jealous—clear back from the days of the *Caribbean*. But, although I don't boast many theories, I have 'em, and one of them is that the third year of married life is the 'charm.' In it the couple comes to the test, sans romance, novelty, pretense. They're sort of like children with an old doll, you know. They pull out the stuffings of love and examine them."

"To think that you are so much deeper, so much more restrained, than the rest of us!" exclaimed Selma, her eyes showing their darkest violet from ingenuous admiration. "Weren't you ever afraid that in a rash moment I might——"

"You see, treasure, I've always trusted you. Besides, if a fellow can't stand the test of his wife's looking around a little in the third year—why, he's not much in the way of a comparison!"

"But, Teddy, I nearly——"

"No, you didn't—not nearly! You're still without a flaw—the little smudge was washed off by your tears last night. I suffered, but I was glad, too, to have you suffer so."

"And you think you will continue to trust me?"

"Look here!" said Theodore. "You and I are human beings, not characters in books—which is some difference. Personally, I'll feel more comfortable with a true-to-life heroine like you—especially since I took the Mendez woman out to dinner just for spite. But you must promise to stop this trying to be a mystic or I'll——"

"I have a theory, too," she confessed. "It takes a brunet beauty from the tropics to teach a blond featherweight like me how much she loves her own stub-nosed, broad-minded husband."

"Hooray!" cried Theodore, but very softly. "Our Rubicon—our third year—is safely crossed."

Nasal Defects *and* Beauty

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

THE nose is the most conspicuous feature in the face and occupies a unique position cosmetically, while its respiratory function makes it one of the most important organs of the body. Although acknowledged as extremely necessary to beauty, the nose finds rather an insignificant place in the regard; we neither condemn nor admire it unless its size, shape, or appearance intrudes pleasantly or otherwise upon our attention. Yet the entire aspect of the countenance is altered for good or ill in accordance with its condition.

Even the size and shape of the nose will pass unnoticed so long as its appearance is healthy. For an organ of such prominence and usefulness, the health of the nose has not been given the heed of attention. Almost every condition of the body is registered here, and, beside all that, the nose has its special troubles. These are chiefly of the nature, due largely to carelessness, neglect, and the overuse of cosmetics. The skin of the nose is supplied with a goodly number of oil glands, especially at the corners where the nose, cheek, and lip meet. Here soil and grime are allowed to collect, and blemishes of one kind or another result. Blackheads are usually more troublesome on the nose than elsewhere. Somehow—perhaps

because projecting from the surface—it does not receive the amount of cleansing it requires. Children, especially boys, neglect the nose almost as much in this respect as they do the ears—"a lick and a promise" seems more than enough in the hurried toilet of the day—while girls and young women are obsessed with a penchant for eternally powdering this innocent organ until it stands out, like the veritable trumpet it is, to proclaim them silly, vain, and misguided in the eyes of all beholders.

If girls could only be made to realize that a whitewashed nose is an offense to good taste, they would surely forswear so unbecoming a practice! If the skin covering the nose has originally been finely grained, neglect and powder will ruin it; if originally coarse, the foundation for future troublesome and unsightly affections will thereby be established. Thorough daily scrubbing of the nose is therefore of immense importance, and this fact should be drilled into children along with other hygienic teachings. Cleanliness is the only thing that will insure the health of the skin; we are not yet considering disease conditions. Soiled and begrimed wash cloths that harbor disease germs are a frequent cause of blemishes in this situation. The oily secretions alone will not give rise to

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eruptions; these are caused by bacteria that bring about decomposition of the secretions.

The nose and all its undulations are best cleansed with the finger tips and warm soapsuds. A complexion brush is of great service when the pores are enlarged and grimy; a shaving brush with a good warm lather of fine soap is excellent to clean out the corners.

In many cases treatment of this kind upon skin that has been neglected stirs up the oil glands, and the after effect is so conspicuous that, rather than have an oily skin until a healthy state is created, the old habits are again adopted—little washing, soiled face cloths, powder! There is only one method by which to refine the skin of the nose—that of *cleanliness*. For the oily, shiny appearance that may result, or that may already exist, the following simple lotion is useful:

Boric acid	¼ dram
Alcohol	½ ounce
Rose water	5½ ounces

Mix and mop the surface several times daily and always at bedtime. This wash is whitening, drying, and astringent. To prevent the action of germs on the oily secretions, an antiseptic powder should be lightly dusted—not rubbed—into the skin. There are many combinations of such face powders, all of them equally effective. An agreeable one for daily use consists of:

Oxide of zinc	¼ ounce
Powdered starch	1½ ounces
Boric acid	20 grains
Oil of eucalyptus	10 drops

A blackhead is not an eruption; it is a blemish. Blackheads result from oily secretions that plug up the pores. As dust is deposited on the outlet, a black speck ensues. When dislodged, it has the appearance of a tiny grub with a black head.

Blackheads *must not* be removed until the skin has been thoroughly softened with hot towels; after which they may be gently squeezed out with the aid of a little instrument that comes expressly for this purpose. When germs act on a collection of sebum (oil), a pimple results. Sometimes the entire nose is studded with tiny eruptions of this kind, and here and there a blackhead may break out into an ugly boil. These



Skin blemishes follow in the wake of the powder puff.

are extremely disfiguring. They should be softened, as directed above, opened with a sterilized needle, and the contents pressed out with medicated cotton; after which they should be daubed with peroxide of hydrogen and patted with a soothing cream or ointment.

Many correspondents complain of large red pimples or boils with hardened centers that fail "to come to a head" and that appear repeatedly, sometimes on the same spot, sometimes on another equally prominent situation upon the nose; a favorite site is the tip. The affected area should be freely covered

with collodion, containing from one-half to two grains of salicylic acid to the dram. Repeat two or three times in twelve hours. This treatment softens and scatters the contents, healing the eruption as well. It will also abort a boil.

When blackheads stud the nose in such numbers that they cannot be removed with an extractor, the parts should be washed thoroughly twice daily with a medicated soap and at bedtime covered with a plaster consisting of the following ointment spread on an old, clean piece of linen:

Salicylic acid	30 grains
Balsam of Peru	2 drams
Lard	6 drams

What can be more disfiguring than a chronically red nose? The causes are rarely local, although one noted dermatologist believes that this condition does follow the lavish use of cosmetics, paints, and irritating lotions. The underlying conditions are first of all *circulatory*—when women wore corsets so tight that they could scarcely breathe, thus impeding the circulation, there were more cases of this sort than we see to-day—secondly, the state of the blood, due to anæmia, chronic stomach and liver troubles, and a host of things that all have their beginnings in dietetic errors. The blood and its circulation are, therefore, always affected in cases of red nose, and as this is a subject of superlative importance and interest to all seekers of beauty and health, we will take it up in our next paper.

We rarely give a thought to the wonderful mechanism of the nose or to its important functions, aside from its being the organ of smell. This sense is far more highly developed in some persons than in others, and here the shape and particularly the *health* of the inner nose plays a great rôle. The sense of smell can be cultivated; it is almost a lost art among us, compared to the high state in which it exists in some

animals. We all know that with a cold in the head the sense of smell is temporarily lost. Those who suffer from chronic catarrhal conditions of the nose are bereft of two of the most delicate and delightfully pleasurable senses, taste and smell, as they are intimately related.

The other functions of the nose are, however, more important. The nostrils are warming chambers for the air we breathe, and the mucous membrane covering them is supplied with fine hairs—cilia—which entangle dust particles and germ-laden organic matter, preventing it from entering beyond these outer portals.

The air is not only warmed, but it is supplied with moisture, and we never stop to think how important this is, because the air is rarely breathed humid enough to keep the air vesicles in the lungs in a moist condition, which is necessary for the introduction of oxygen into the blood and the elimination of carbonic acid from it. *Nearly a quart of water is secreted from the nose in the course of twenty-four hours*, but the mechanism is so delicately constructed and the balance so perfectly adjusted that under normal conditions not one drop of this escapes from the nose; it is all used by the inspired air. No matter what the external temperature is, it is raised to the body temperature by the time it has passed through the nasal chambers.

The nose acts as a resonator for the voice, too, modifying its tone and character. So when we *do* stop to think of these things, the importance of looking after the early health needs of children, so that their future beauty will be assured, looms large before one.

A well-known authority holds that the cause of so-called "inherited" tendency to adenoids is frequently found in the inherited family nose, it being more common in children whose nostrils have a narrow, slitlike orifice than in those

whose nostrils are wide open. He also thinks that enlarged tonsils, adenoids, and other vegetative growths in the back of the nose are due to chronic rhinitis in children as well as adults. This is not a paper on adenoids or colds, but the extraordinary importance of maintaining the integrity of the nasal chambers is so great that more attention should be given the subject. Children should be taught the value of *nose breathing*. The nose should be encouraged in various ways to assume its manifest functions. Mouth breathing should be forbidden, and in case of slitlike nostrils, they should be distended by inserting small pieces of rubber tubing containing a large lumen that will admit of the free ingress of air.

This is an original idea that has been successfully carried out in several youngsters and one adult, all of whom have the narrow nostrils alluded to and were martyrs to colds and other disagreeable discomforts arising from their inability to breathe through the nose until the rubber tubing—an inch in length for adults, less for children—was used. Of course it should be worn during sleep; and as it insures instant relief from the distress of a "stopped-up" nose, it is voluntarily worn in private at other times. This rubber tubing can be purchased by the foot or yard, and fresh pieces cut off every day. The nostrils should always be cleaned before using, and the little rubbers dipped in hot water and softened before inserting them; otherwise the delicate lining of the nostrils may be injured and an inflammation started.

This delicate lining of the nose secretes a mucus that is bactericidal, and it is a moot question among nose-and-throat specialists as to the wisdom of using a nasal douche in the general routine of the daily toilet, such as cleaning the teeth, for instance. One specialist says that children should be taught to blow the nose vigorously night



Nasal distenders worn at all possible times.

and morning to clear the passages, and that this practice, early ingrained and carried out through life, will be sufficient in the way of treatment for a healthy nose. Of course it need not be added that for diseased affections the douche cannot very well be dispensed with.

The nasal distenders referred to above will aid the tender structures of a child's nose to broaden. Narrow, slitlike nasal passages, by interfering with breathing, are a serious menace to a healthy and beautiful development of body and mind. The shape of the nose does not often call for surgical measures unless it is actually deformed, congenitally or through an accident. Complete absence of the nose at birth has been reported, but it is rare. Much can be done to remold a misshapen nose, if it is taken in early youth before the structures have fully matured. Gentle pressure on the cartilages, with massage of the softer parts and the use of astringent creams and lotions, will do much toward reducing a very fleshy nose.

There are all sorts and conditions of noses, from the concave to the perfect one that we usually designate as Greek.

We seldom, if ever, see the Greek type to-day, because it is a racial characteristic that has not survived—except in their matchless statues—any more than any other feature or quality of that superb race. As a remarkable example of featural endurance in a race, nothing is more striking than the Hebrew nose, which has been, if anything, intensified by the strict observance of their hygienic laws, which have resulted, despite the endless vicissitudes to which this race has been subjected, in making it the most vital and characteristic on earth. For these same reasons, nasal troubles are not common among Hebrews.

Until quite recently, surgeons have given very little attention to remodeling noses for the mere sake of improving the features and thus adding to the beauty and attractiveness of the face. It is being done now, and some surprisingly good results have been obtained. Casts of the nose are made

as is done of the jaws in dentistry, and a support is prepared of the desired shape and size, which is made of rubber and worn inside. By this means, a false nose is made, instead of subjecting the patient to a plastic operation.

Concavity of the nose is a serious detriment to the appearance, and this deformity is now corrected by means of a tripod made of metal, worn free in the nasal cavity. Obliquity or one-sidedness is corrected in the same way. When the nose is unduly long, it can be shortened, and the superfluous skin and cartilage retained and used upon another patient whose nose has been injured or on one that is congenitally defective. This form of surgery promises much for the reconstruction of a feature heretofore sadly neglected.

NOTE: Doctor Whitney will gladly give further information on this important subject to any one who desires it.

Answers to Queries

MARGARET.—You doubtless have failed to see repeated references in this column to the fact that there are a number of formulas we never publish. Among them is that for devitalizing superfluous hair, by Professor Sabourand, of Paris. We are glad, however, to send this to our readers upon request, and when a stamped, self-addressed envelope is inclosed.

Yes, peroxide of hydrogen and ammonia, equal parts, does in many instances destroy superfluous hair. It is not always successful. The solution will invariably bleach the hairs, and sometimes they rot and fall out. The skin becomes reddened, but is otherwise uninjured. The applications must be made twice daily.

MOTHER.—Contrary to your belief, the shape of the ear *has* a good deal to do with the sense of hearing. You must not prod into the ear to remove soil or wax. An authority urges us to put nothing smaller than the elbow into the ear! He also condemns the use of a little syringe for washing out

the ear. Temporary loss of hearing often arises from an accumulation of wax that has hardened; on its removal, the condition disappears.

MRS. R. S. T.—It has always been a puzzle to me why women—and men, too, for that matter—do not realize the immense beauty value of caring for the health of the eyes and their settings. I do not allude to defects in vision, but to the mucous membrane covering the eyes and lids, to the many affections of the lashes and brows, due to carelessness and neglect. It will therefore give me great pleasure to send you formulae for a celebrated eye wash and for an ointment for the brows and lashes.

JOHN DOE.—It is said a man can tell at twenty-five whether he is destined to become bald by the habits his hair has acquired up to that time. Therefore, the most important years to look after it are from fifteen to twenty. Do you care for a leaflet on "Hair Health?"

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.



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After school hours and winter evenings always find the Brunswick the center of

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Balls, Cues, Etc., FREE

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Get our 30-day home trial offer and see these tables in our handsome colored catalog—"Billiards—The Home Magnet."

Write or send the attached coupon and have this book by return mail free! Send today and decide in time for Christmas delivery.

Name

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Send FREE, postpaid, color-book, "Billiards—The Home Magnet" and tell about your home trial offer.



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WON'T you give us the opportunity to prove to you why Crème Mignon—the Perfect Cold Cream—is recommended by the most beautiful women of the stage and screen—why Crème Mignon is the favorite cream of New York's Society Women?

DON'T ENVY A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN when a few minutes time at night with Crème Mignon will bring to your face the same rosy glow of youth and perfect health—the appealing freshness and charm to which every woman is entitled. Carelessness alone is responsible for a sallow complexion, unsightly blotches and a tired, drawn face. It is easy to make your friends proud of you. Can you afford not to?

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SPECIAL OFFER to readers of SMITH'S MAGAZINE. We will mail, on receipt of 50c., a beautiful Aluminum Box, Purple Glass, containing Crème Mignon and Clair Mignon Complexion Powder—enough for two or three weeks. Write today. This offer is presented at a great loss for a short time only, to prove the wonderful value of the Mignon products. Large jar of Crème Mignon 50c. postpaid.

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IN THIS DAY AND AGE attention to your appearance is an absolute necessity if you expect to make the most out of life. Not only should you wish to appear as attractive as possible for your own self-satisfaction, which is alone well worth your efforts, but you will find the world in general judging you greatly, if not wholly, by your "look," therefore it pays to "look your best" at all times. Permit no one to see you looking otherwise; it will injure your welfare! Upon the impression you constantly make rests the failure or success of your life. Which is to be your ultimate destiny? My new *Nose-Shaper* ("TRADOS" (Model 28) corrects now ill-shaped noses without operation, quickly, safely and permanently. Is pleasant and does not interfere with one's occupation, being worn at night.

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Annabell Williams was born with Club Feet. After other treatment had failed, her mother brought her to the McLain Sanitarium, January 17, 1916, at 11 years of age. Four months later they returned home—happy. Read the mother's letter.

"I took Annabell home, on May 19, 1916, with two straight and useful feet. Today she runs and plays as any child. We can't say enough for the McLain Sanitarium and will gladly answer all letters of inquiry." Mrs. Morgan Williams, Higbee, Mo.

This deformity was corrected without plaster paris or general anesthesia.

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This private institution is devoted to the treatment of children and young adults afflicted with Club Feet, Infantile Paralysis, Spinal Diseases and Curvature, Hip Disease, Bow Legs, Knock Knees, Wry Neck, etc. Our valuable book "Deformities and Paralysis," with Book of References, free.

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for civil service positions. Big pay; steady work; short hours; regular vacations; rapid advancement; many vacancies this year. Uncle Sam needs men. I will give you the training you need.

Good Salaries Are Offered

From \$900 to \$1800 a year. Lifetime employment. You can qualify in a short time for one of these positions.


Write Today Sure these splendid positions.

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now buys a dazzling Lachnite Gem. Their brilliance is eternal—they stand fire and acid tests and cut glass like diamonds. Cost but one-third as much. Set in solid gold. The newest designs. Sold on Free Trial. See our new jewelry book. Write for Big Jewelry Book Your name and address is enough. No obligations whatever. Write today—now.

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12 N. Michigan Avenue, Dept. 11 55 Chicago, Ill.



To Give Your Skin Nature's Own Charm

Naturally, Quickly, Surely—Use
Dr. James P. Campbell's Safe
Arsenic Complexion Wafers

This marvelous beautifier of the complexion is guaranteed to surely clear the skin of pimples, blackheads, wrinkles, redness, sallow skin, etc. Do not hesitate to give them a trial; test their wonderful health and beauty building efficiency. They put you in perfect condition, build up the system, removing all impurities from the blood, the real cause of all skin affections. Act now—send for a box—mailed in plain cover on receipt of price, 50c and \$1.00 per box, from

RICHARD FINK CO., Dept. 54, 396 Broadway, N. Y.

SPECIAL FREE OFFER—To introduce to those unacquainted with Campbell's Wafers we will mail two large \$1.00 boxes for \$1.00 if you inclose this advertisement.



Neolin Comforts Neolin Lasts

Child alike of man's imagination and of his synthetic genius — Neolin today is acclaimed by the modern man for the modern achievement which it IS. Born but a year ago, its coming marked the decline of the leather sole.

FOR Neolin—the natural tread—is as superior to leather as is electricity to gas. Neolin is better in every way that sole-leather is good. And good when sole-leather is not. Neolin costs far less than leather because it wears far longer, and saves not shoe-bills alone but doctors' bills as well.

Indeed, hundreds of thousands are grateful to Neolin for its absolute water-tight tread and for the foot-muscles it develops through Neolin flexibility. And Neolin looks as good as it feels! It comes in one certain dependable grade — Goodyear grade—indicated by the mark "Neolin." Mark that mark—stamp it on your memory. Dealers or shoe-repairers have Neolin—or can get it at no added cost to you.

Every Genuine Neolin Sole Bears the Brand Neolin

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Your Catarrh Can Be Cured INSTANT RELIEF Prove It At My Expense



Don't send me one cent—just let me prove it to you as I have done for 56,322 others in the last six months. I claim to have the most successful treatment for Catarrh ever found and I want you to let me send you my secret FREE, entirely at my expense.

I don't care how many so-called cures, lotions, sprays, atomizers, things to smoke or inhale or electricity you ever tried without success—if I don't care how disgusted you are with them all—you have not tried my way and I have such absolute confidence in it that **I am going to send you this secret absolutely FREE.** It is a wonderful yet simple home treatment which relieves you almost instantly of catarrh, headnoises, catarrhal deafness, asthma, hay fever and all catarrhal troubles; it removes the cause of Catarrh and thus the ugly symptoms disappear—all this while you are at your work, in company, at church or theatre, sleeping or awake. I know it will do all this because it cured me after everything else failed; it cured my friends and thousands have written to me telling me how it cured them, and I want you to send for this secret **FREE**, at my expense, because I know you will then tell your friends about it just as those 56,322 others are doing now. Write now, as this announcement may not appear in this paper again. Just send your name and address and everything will be sent you promptly in plain envelope.

SAM KATZ, Suite A1456, 7909 Indiana Ave., Chicago, Ill.

DO YOU LONG TO HAVE YOUR HAIR SOME CERTAIN SHADE?



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Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1916:

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is one of the publishers of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publishers, Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; editor, Charles A. MacLean, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; managing editors, Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; business managers, Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Smith Publishing House, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., a firm, composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. SMITH,

of the firm of Street & Smith, publisher.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of September, 1916, Charles W. Ostertag, Notary Public, No. 29, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1917.)

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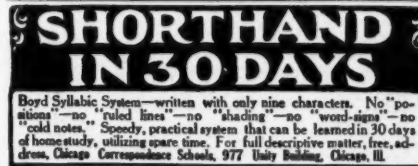
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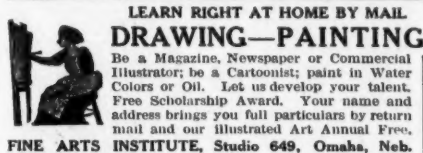
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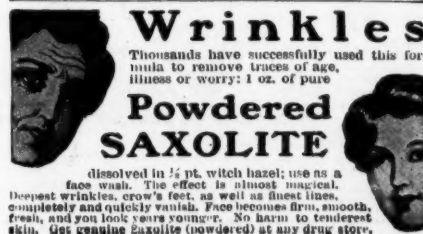
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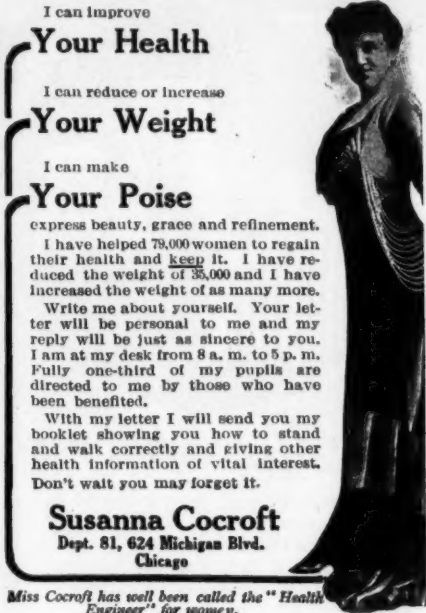


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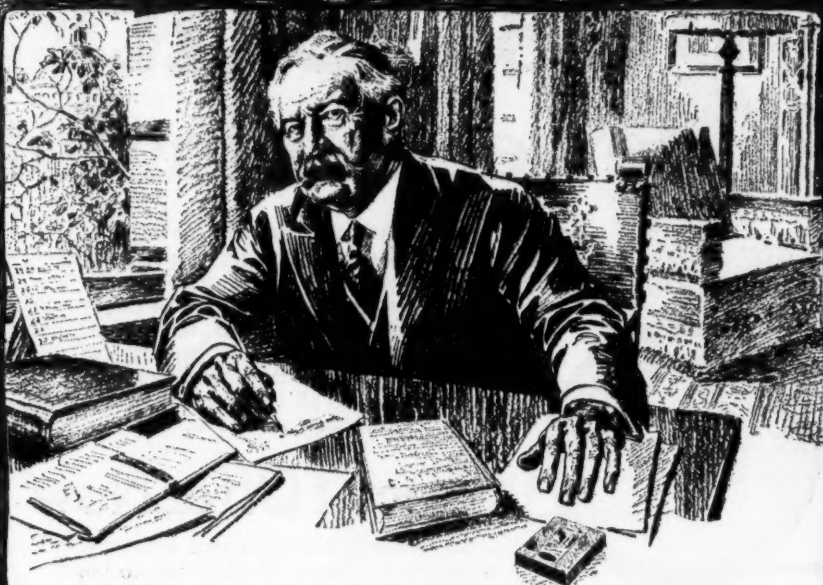
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